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The Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar: Rousseau's Lesson for the Legislator

By

William James Gordon Bewick

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Department of Political Science

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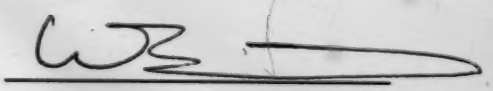

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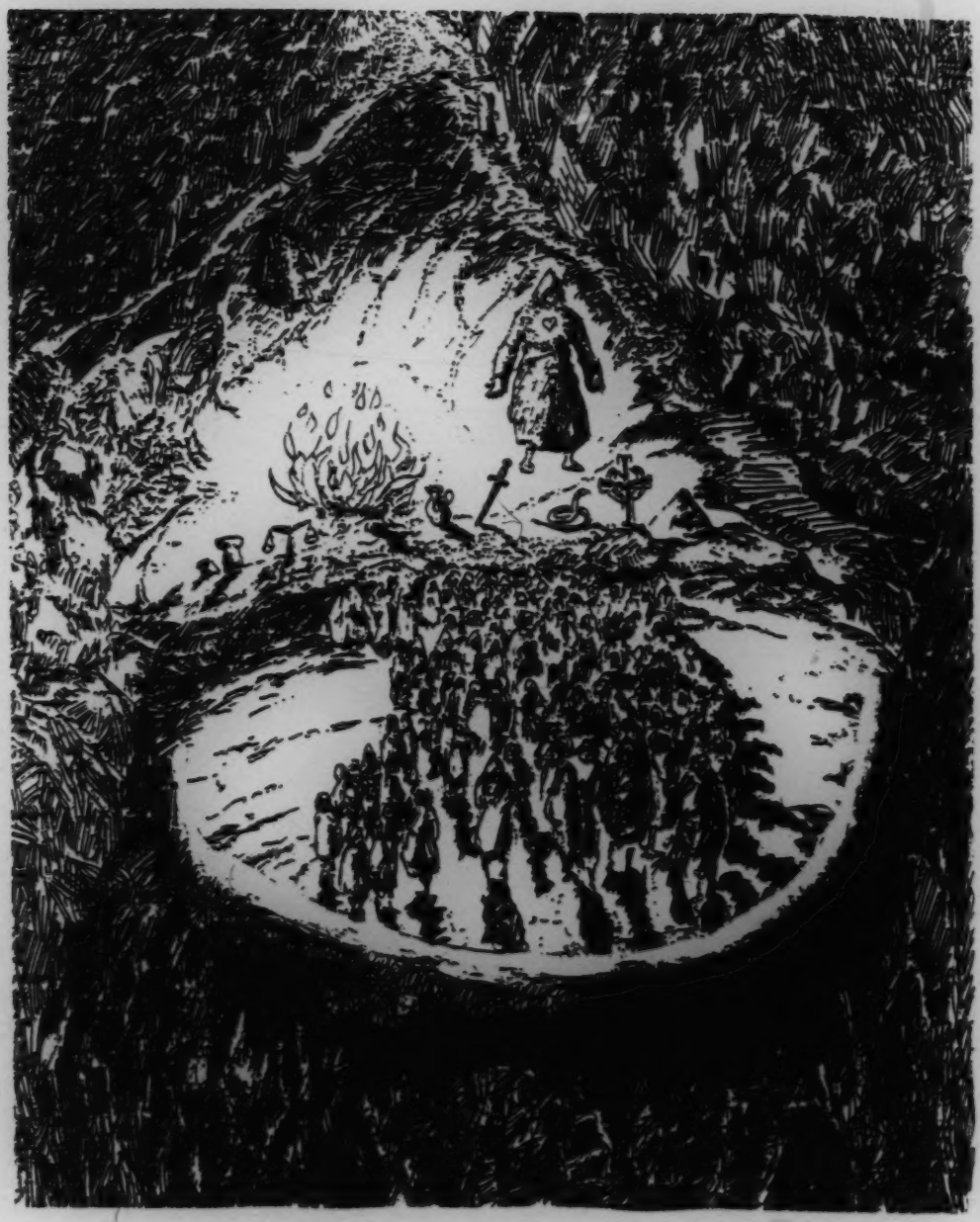
ABSTRACT

This thesis is an analysis of "The Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" in Rousseau's Emile, along with what I believe to be a necessary consideration of the place of its natural religion in Rousseau's larger project. I will outline my understanding of this project in the Introduction, and the role of religion in it (as presented in "On Civil Religion") in Chapter One. In Chapter Two, I will consider the interpretive implications of the characters in the Profession, and the necessary antagonism of religion and philosophy. This brings me to the central chapter, where I give an analysis aimed at understanding the Vicar's faith. In Chapter Four I consider the contribution the Profession makes to the problem of religion and philosophy, and in the final chapter the contribution it makes to the problem of religion and politics – particularly the lesson it gives to the Legislator.



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Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *The Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar: Rousseau's Lesson for the Legislator* submitted by William James Gordon Bewick in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Dr. Leon H. Craig, Supervisor

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Dr. Robert Wilcocks

Date: 20/7/2000

Preface

I was once told after reading a draft of my Introduction aloud that I need to convey at the outset why I have a passion for the subject matter of the thesis. The first time I read the Profession, I was converted from an unreflecting agnostic/atheist into a fairly persuaded Deist. Though subsequent study has made it such that the Vicar may not be my final Apostle, I credit the Profession and my study of it for deepening my understanding of some of the highest *and* most important matters. Though I somewhat hubristically attempt to cover many of the most difficult problems (to my mind, anyway) in political philosophy - largely pertaining to the relationship between man, city, and God - I consider it far more hubristic to attempt to cover the relationship between the first two without making an effort to account for the role of the latter.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank Dr. Tom Pocklington, for kindling my original interest in Political Philosophy, Rousseau, and the Profession, and for supervising much of my thesis.

I thank Dr. Robert Wilcocks for being a most fair and helpful member of my committee.

I owe a considerable debt to Dr. Heidi Studer for a number of things, only one of which is for the substantial effort she took to help me improve this thesis and for sitting on my committee.

Dr. Leon Craig compelled me to make this thesis much better than it was, for which I am intensely grateful. He is the only man I know whom I doubt Rousseau himself would find fault with, and I set his example as a model in every important facet of life.

I am also grateful for having an incredible group of compatriots throughout my studies who were invaluable by way of, among other things, setting examples for me that aroused my sense of competition. Among them, Bryan Smith and Patrick Kernahan gave me an idea early on of the dedication required. More recently, Tobin Craig and David Verbitsky invigorated our group, reminding us how much more we should know. Throughout it all, Allison Smith, Kevin Thomas, Waseem El-Rayes, and Andy Muwais were the band of brothers whom I shared a great deal with. Andy Muwais was of notable assistance in this thesis, though all deserve thanks.

For their support at various stages of the more than three years this thesis took to complete, I thank Isabelle Gromek, Bret Smith, Rob Anders, and James Istvanffy.

In all the above respects and more I owe a debt to my parents that I could never repay. Justice dictates, however, that I forever try.

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Notice on Citation Style

In the case of authors other than Rousseau, for the sake of ease I have listed their last names and year of publication if there are more than one. For the writings in the Masters edition of the Social Contract I have used the format, for example, of '(SC 123)'. For Rousseau's other books I have listed the title and page. Because of the extraordinarily dense pages in Emile, for my own sake I made the search for references much quicker by lettering the paragraphs. I have left these letters, and not included the title in each citation, so the format used in citing Emile appears as like '(391b)', with the first block of text on the page counting as 'a'. When a quote or idea carries over a page I have used, for example, '(444c-a)'. Though this resembles the style for citing Plato, I do not expect that those accustomed to reading his work will find hard to adapt to what I have done with Emile.

"I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind. And therefore God never wrought miracle to convince atheism, because his ordinary works convince it. It is true, that a little philosophy inclineth a man's mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion..."

Francis Bacon, **Essays,** *On Atheism*

"Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unus'd"

Hamlet, IV.iv.36-39

We live to survive our paradoxes."

Gordon Downie, *Springtime in Vienna*

Introduction

"Don't you notice," I said, "how great is the harm
coming from the practice of dialectic these days?"
"What's that?" he said.
"Surely its students," I said, "are filled with
lawlessness...and don't you sympathize?"

The Republic (537e)

In 1762, Jean-Jacques Rousseau published two of his most controversial and influential works, the Social Contract and Emile. They come before the midpoint of his writing career (1749-1778), but whether because of the trouble these two books caused for him personally or because of his satisfaction with them, the remainder of his writings consisted mostly of 'apologies' for his previous publications or autobiographical investigations into his life and the human psyche. His career as a political philosopher in the strict sense can be seen to culminate with these two classic works. They are radically different, and yet together they are excellent representations of Rousseau's approach to political philosophy, which is to study man and society as analytically separate and yet practically intertwined entities. This approach is exemplified in both his First Discourse and Second Discourse - especially the latter, where he begins consideration of 'solitary man', then shows the natural evolution of social life resulting in modern society. The idea that individual man and the polity he lives in are intimately related, and yet are importantly distinct and irreducible to the other, is hardly novel. From Plato looking at justice writ small and large in the city and man, to

Hobbes' mechanistic analogy between the body of a natural man and the artificial commonwealth with which he introduces his Leviathan, some form of this idea has always been present. In Emile and the Social Contract, however, Rousseau takes the dichotomy to a new level in speaking of, and to, completely different sides of us in a uniquely pronounced way. Emile is directed at the individual man, and anyone in a position to educate him. The Social Contract is directed towards the citizen, and anyone involved in shaping or creating the political environment in which he is to live. The ostensible goal of the first is to cultivate virtue, wisdom, and inner happiness in the individual regardless of his polity. That of the second is to depict the sort of polity in which people can truly be citizens, and wherein are cultivated the qualities such as patriotism and law-abidingness necessary to sustaining a good polity. These two purposes are not, of course, mutually exclusive; there are necessarily political implications in the former, as well as observations and assumptions regarding human nature in the latter. There is nonetheless an evident division of the person into *man* and *citizen* in the two works, and it is clear that the first is the primary concern in Emile. In Emile, it is as if we are - for the first time since the state of nature - presented with an individual unaffected by the particularities of a particular regime: a man without a polity.

The proper consideration of a man and his polity can be done only by (and must necessarily be done by) a political philosopher. This consideration can be seen to begin with Plato, and there is no question but that Rousseau takes him as the starting point for political philosophy. Part of Rousseau's (and his Vicar's) projects, as I will explain below, is

to correct the unhealthy effect that Plato's praise of the sublime life of reason had on modern society. While Rousseau and his good priest appear to be more or less agreed on the problem, one of the differences between them is that the Vicar seems to hold it against Plato, while Rousseau holds it against his times and the Enlightenment[1] interpreters who typify this superficial form of rationalism. The 'unhealthy' consequences (both psychologically and politically) of this rationalism are key to my understanding of Rousseau's overall intentions (especially my analysis in Chapters Two and Four). It is therefore appropriate to give a fuller elaboration of what this Enlightenment rationalism is, and why Rousseau felt it so important that he combat it.

The fundamental accusation that Rousseau and the Vicar make is that the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment took the ambiguity and difficulty of understanding the just and the good as proof of such knowledge being either impossible to acquire or referring to something illusory (it does not practically matter much which). One can imagine the *philosophes* departing from a Platonic conversation, having seen Socrates able to prove the superiority of his 'ignorance' to anyone else's 'knowledge', and saying to themselves, "Well, Socrates sure showed them that they didn't know anything. I guess nobody really does." This

[1] On the authority of Orwin, Melzer, Bloom, and Strauss I'm using the label of 'the Enlightenment' to refer to the rationalist thinkers (typically secularistic, humanistic, and 'scientific') who tended to dominate Rousseau's time. While it may not be the term Rousseau would use, it does identify the dominant spirit of the age as it is known today. I owe most of my understanding of Rousseau's "anti-Enlightenment" position to these four writers. Their various expositions of an interpretation originally suggested by Strauss (1947) each gave a 'logos' to unformed ideas I was trying to grasp, and made fitting observations that I was far from conceiving. Doubtless, my amalgamation has done injustice to them all.

was based on a misunderstanding of 'Socratic ignorance', which is presented by Plato as something higher than both unselfconscious ignorance and false opinion. Achieving ignorance, or removing all prejudices, was incorrectly seen by the *philosophes* as the termination of enquiry (especially in matters of goodness, justice, and virtue), as opposed to being simply a necessary step on the way to a better understanding of these matters.

For Rousseau and the Vicar, the position of the *philosophes* is clearly neither sufficient nor tenable. As Clifford Orwin so succinctly puts it, "The fatal paradox of the 'Enlightenment' is that the crusade to end the reign of prejudice has itself become the reigning prejudice. Bigotry commands the stage garbed as opposition to itself; opinion poses as transcendence of opinion" (Orwin, 176). In discussing this 'Enlightenment paradox' further, I will call the 'ignorance' achieved by the Enlightenment thinkers 'pseudo-ignorance'; so-called because they try to pass it off as genuine in a Socratic sense, despite the fact that theirs becomes another, even more dangerous prejudice that certainly does not correspond in its implications with the 'ignorance' of Socrates.

Orwin's summary judgement cited above brings up a second crucial reason why the Enlightenment can be seen to end the Socratic journey when it should only be getting underway. The "crusade to end the reign of prejudice" implies an attempt to reform society along purely rational and secular lines, whereas one of Plato's most consistent teachings is that the philosophic life is possible only for the very few, and

that this pursuit is always in tension with the polity.[2] This two-part claim hinges on the premise that everyday political life is based on shared opinions, and can not be based on Socratic ignorance, much less genuine knowledge. And insofar as the ultimate goal of philosophy (or science, which was for Plato the same thing) is the replacement of opinion with knowledge, it is, as tacitly shown in the Apology, at odds with society. For it must call into question the fundamental opinions upon which the polity is based, opinions which in order to serve their purpose should be regarded as beyond question, or as the simple truth. Whereas, anything resembling *genuine* truth would necessarily have to be vulgarized in being adopted by the vulgar. Thus the Enlightenment, in presuming to spread Socratic ignorance and rationality throughout society, actually brought about only the pseudo-ignorance I alluded to before.

This pseudo-ignorance emerged hand in hand with the ascension of modern science as we now know it, which Rousseau saw as the primary danger of his time. Rousseau was the first thinker of consequence to argue that the crisis of the modern age is the spread of science.[3] It was not science itself that he cursed,[4] but its rise to the status of being the primary (if not exclusive) authority, gaining predominance over the

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[2] This is, of course, assuming that direct philosophic rule (i.e. philosophic kingship) is not a practical possibility.

[3] Francis Bacon, especially in The Wisdom of the Ancients, remarkably foresees many of the potential problems in the scientific project he promoted, but the project itself was not sufficiently advanced at the time to generate any substantial, over-arching concern.

[4] See Strauss (1947) where he argues that the apparent paradox in Rousseau's criticizing the arts and sciences through his celebrated practitioning of them is eased by Rousseau's subtle indications that the life of science is the highest or noblest sort, but far too impractical and thus unhealthy for a society to try to embrace.

traditions, which had ruled previously. In regarding as futile the pursuit of moral knowledge in the traditional fashion, the Enlightenment turned to modern science as the sole source of proven knowledge. This new authority was not only radically incomplete, but essentially amoral, and thus threatened the moral roots of society.[5]

That Rousseau was concerned with the effects of, for lack of a better term, 'bad philosophy' as practiced by some of his contemporaries is well documented. It is the explicit theme of his first work, and it recurs in his apparent denunciation of 'philosophy' in (among other writings) the Second Discourse and Emile.[6] Orwin best summarizes the basis of Rousseau's rejection of the Enlightenment in saying:

> If in every society not reason but opinion will reign, it follows that we must not judge the reigning opinions in terms of their reasonableness in the primary sense - i.e., their correspondence to the conclusions of reason. The indicated standard is rather their reasonableness *as opinions* - i.e., their adequacy to the social task of opinion. Not truth but health is the test of opinion -

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[5] Not only is science generally amoral, but it tends to be hostile to morality because the traditional authorities who defend and promote morality also tend to want to limit the extent to which science can investigate. When science challenged doctrines such as Geocentricism and Creation, the antipathy generated by the Church towards the scientists increased, in turn giving science more reason to debunk the moral authorities and thereby undercut morality. A modern example of this mutual antipathy can be seen in the issue of bio-engineering.

[6] I feel fairly confident that, since he spent most of his life engaged in philosophizing, it is not philosophy *per se* that he detests, but 'bad philosophy'. This would be the shallow, vain, self-serving sort that is characterized by something like pseudo-ignorance and pays little heed to the potentially harmful social effects of its ideas. We could also look to the Vicar, whose disappointment with philosophers was so profound that he eventually "closed all the books" (306d). As with science, Rousseau's rhetoric is so sweeping because qualification would render the attack useless, since nobody thinks (or at least admits) that they do 'bad' philosophy, nor what may be better termed 'detrimental' science.

> and Enlightenment, as Rousseau will contend in the Discourse, promotes a climate of opinion that is as harmful as it is bogus. He thus implies the necessity of contriving a viable alternative to it. (Orwin, 176)

This brings to the fore two elements in Rousseau's thought that make it difficult to fully grasp. The first is the belief he shares with Plato, that the true knowledge needed for properly ordering human affairs is *at best* extremely difficult to acquire, and even harder to communicate; thus, we should not expect any of these truths, if present, to be easily understood in his writing. The second emanates from his explicit charge against the proponents of the Enlightenment regarding their lack of concern for the potential effects of their 'project' on the health of opinions in their polity. This should make us wary in reading Rousseau himself; that is, aware that he might be less than forthright - if not intentionally misleading - regarding knowledge that may be harmful to the healthy opinions of members of his audience.[7] This is in large part what makes a philosopher 'political' - keeping the impact of his writing in mind while writing - and in this sense Rousseau is clearly a 'political' philosopher.[8] Having sketched what Rousseau sees as the problem, I will now turn to Orwin's concluding point in the passage quoted above: that Rousseau means to produce a "viable alternative" to the project put forth by the Enlightenment.

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[7] This especially relevant to the subject matter in the Profession, and will be a central topic in Chapter Two. The concern is not only for protecting ordinary people from harmful *truths*. What is surely a bigger concern is protecting people from harmful *opinions*.

For the daunting task of saving modernity, Rousseau enlists two characters to assist him in his project: the Savoyard Vicar and the Legislator. The Vicar, through a profession of his faith, counters the deleterious effects of both the dogmatic, intolerant Church, and the godless but equally dogmatic and intolerant *philosophes*. The Legislator is charged with implementing Rousseau's understanding of the social contract, which will entrench the principles of freedom and equality. This is a goal, which the Enlightenment also covets, but misunderstands, and thus can be expected to go about it in a bad way. I will first discuss the role played by the Vicar, and then turn to that of the Legislator.

A central component of what makes up the common opinion that characterizes a society is a shared idea of morality and goodness. In most of the Western world of Rousseau's time, the Church had been the main opinion-maker for over a thousand years. If the Church were still authoritative, it appears that, despite its problems, the Vicar (and perhaps even Rousseau) would leave its contradictions alone for the sake of good order.[9] Because of factors associated with the Enlightenment, however, it was fast losing its hold on common opinions. Through the scientific debunking of traditional beliefs such as geocentricism, the Church lost credibility in the face of this new authority. One can easily imagine that as thoughtful people gained an education, and saw more and more

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[8] For a fuller explication of this idea Cf. Craig (xvii-xxv).

[9] The Vicar says "if your sentiments were more stable, I would hesitate to expound mine to you. But in your present condition you will benefit from thinking as I do" (295). According to the footnote Rousseau inserts at this point, he believes that this

wonders of nature explained better and better by science, they tended to find the miracles supporting revelation less believable - not to mention the 'unscientific' interpretations and explanations of various phenomena given by the Church's ministers. Churchmen had made revelation and their right to interpret it a linchpin of their authority, and accordingly people would lose faith in the Church as its 'revealed truth' was rendered problematic. Rousseau saw that as thoughtful people proceeded to leave the Church, they tended to leave God thoughtlessly behind them (along with everything else related to the forsaken faith). The Enlightenment's conception of scientific rationality was the alternative source of guidance; but in Rousseau's view, this was the last place people should look, what with its infatuation with an amoral, materialistic ontology, and accompanying posture of pseudo-ignorance about moral matters. It was more apt to be a source of unhealthy opinions, accepted out of a desire to join the most 'enlightened' as far from society's discredited 'common opinions' as possible.

Enter the Vicar. His account of his faith could reasonably be summarized as an investigation of what to conclude given not only what can be observed of the external world, but also certain strong inclinations within us that seem to be innate. To most people, the world seems to be an ordered whole, and we all experience a kind of inner sense of justice manifested in something like the conscience that seems innate if not divine. This observable external order and inner sense of justice, along with various other phenomena properly considered, would at a minimum

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idea is applicable "to the public at present." It is not clear, though, if he means only the second sentence or the first as well (cf. also 310b).

lead most open-minded people to suspect that there is a God.[10] As the Vicar demonstrates, though, the further step of demanding faith in divine revelation - the basis of the organized religions that have given an account of these phenomena for millennia - is in many respects contrary to the reason we have presumably also been given by God. This is only the most prominent of various problems with established religions. Yet the same faculty of reason which might lead us to dismiss revelation was leading the 'enlightened' intellectuals of the day to equally unreasonable positions. The Vicar saw this manifested in the disturbingly relativistic (im)morality of the Enlightenment - a position which becomes possible only after dismissing God and all other transcendent conceptions of justice or goodness. According to the Vicar, faith guided by revelation alone is shown by reason to be inadequate, but discursive reason alone is also inadequate insofar as it cannot answer the most important and primary questions concerning our souls, morality, justice, virtue, and the nature of God. When applied to these questions, 'pure' reason often comes to different (and to the Vicar's mind, much worse) conclusions than those of faith (or trust) that our inclination to goodness and sense of justice within us lead us to. However, the Vicar also shows that strict reliance on revelation is unreasonable in the same way a strict reliance on reason is. This critical dilemma will be examined further in Chapter Two, as I think it sheds light on the legitimacy of the Vicar's approach since strict reasoning does not seem able to treat the matter adequately.

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[10] I cannot avoid the vagueness of my language here. The origins of the Vicar's position will be treated much more thoroughly in Chapter Three. In this thesis, I mean by 'God' whatever power created or rules our existence.

Besides exploring the flaws in exclusively trusting either reason or revelation, the Profession tries to overcome this problem by deriving a position of natural religion that essentially re-founds morality on the strongest of foundations: God. Instead of relying on alleged revelation and fantastic miracles produced long ago to determine that He exists and what His existence means for us, this natural religion claims to be based solely on an appropriate integration of reasoning and the innate sense of things that we possess within us; for the Vicar, the true revelation is written in our hearts. It is not by staring at the altar in our local Church that we will find God, nor in memorizing and dogmatically reciting scripture. At the same time, looking into ourselves we do not find only the many spinning wheels of a complex machine that the 'social scientists' of Rousseau's time were implicitly, if not explicitly, claiming to see. Rather, it is in the good, even partially divine nature that God has providentially given us, ever at work in all the trials we face, that we can discover all we need to know about the true good and true God.

The revolution in morals resulting from the spread of Enlightenment thinking brought with it the possibility, and even the necessity, for a complementary political change. While I am not able here to give this idea the attention its adequate explication requires, suffice it to note that this revolution brought with it the demand for two specific political ideals: freedom and equality.[11] Briefly put, with the

[11] For a similar argument, see Allan Bloom's "Rousseau: the Turning Point" in Giants and Dwarfs: Essays 1960-1990 pp. 208-211.

spreading recognition that the traditional twin authorities of the monarch and the Church were based not on eternal truths but merely upon common, and dubitable, opinions, came their inevitable demise.[12] Individuals were accordingly encouraged to appropriate moral authority for themselves in the absence of any rightful claimant - natural or divine. Thus democracy, being dedicated principally to freedom and equality, and by definition the regime that claims to derive its authority from the consent of its composing individuals, appeared on the horizon - a horizon that Rousseau could presciently see from his heights. He was mindful, though, both of the fact that freedom and equality were not principles that wrote a constitution for themselves, and that there were higher and lower conceptions of these principles. Much gray area remained to be determined, and in view of the thoughtlessness of the Enlightenment in regard to moral matters and the general need for healthy common opinions as the basis for a harmonious polity, Rousseau knew that there was work to be done. It was with this in mind that he wrote the Social Contract, which entrenched the required ideals by taking the political principles of modernity and putting them together in a logical and comprehensive fashion directed at ennobling mankind - rather than letting this 'progression' debase man (as he feared it otherwise would). However, given that the political realm is subject to the intellectual limitations of its members, the persuasiveness of cold logic (as he makes clear)[13] will not suffice, and accordingly he saw the need for the sober

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[12] Rousseau evidently despised the corrupt clergy and divisive papacy of his time as much as anyone; he simply does not seem to have been willing - even if only for moral reasons - to throw the Deity out with the Holy Water. Neither was he willing to throw political order and civic virtue out with the dictator.

[13] See p.66-69 of the Social Contract, discussion of which occurs in Chapter Five.

guidance which only an uncommon prudence can provide. This guidance would need to come from a dynamic and persuasive person who also possessed an overall understanding of the project. Only then could a healthy version of the requisite 'common opinion' be firmly entrenched while the contract was implemented.

Enter the Legislator. In my examination of the details of this complex character in Chapter Five, a key part of my analysis will be an illustration of how he complements the Vicar for Rousseau's purposes. In their separate roles, these two characters reflect the two-fold intentions of Rousseau as a political philosopher - through the Vicar he hopes to minister to the souls of individuals; through the Legislator he hopes to minister to the general welfare of all through having a positive impact on the polity in which they live.[14] A third 'part' should be added to Rousseau's cast of characters, that being the role of the philosopher, who subtly sheds light on truths of man and his polity for the few able to understand - this role I would argue is played by Rousseau to the fullest.

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[14] This split between man and citizen is not meant to be any more pronounced than the difference between Emile and the Social Contract. As I will explain in my last two chapters, the teaching in the Profession is of use to the Legislator. This may not be obvious, but it should not be surprising either, given the inter-relatedness stressed by Rousseau between the individual's well-being and that of his polity. In a footnote to his preface to The Political Philosophy of Rousseau, Roger D. Masters provides evidence that these two books are importantly connected when he notes:
writing to his French publisher, Rousseau said of the *Contrat Social*: "this work, having been cited several times and even summarized in the treatise on education [*Emile*] should be considered as a kind of appendix to it...." Letter to Duchesne, 23 May 1762. This does not mean, of course, that Rousseau viewed his political teaching as a contradiction of his other works; in the letter just quoted, Rousseau went on to insist that the *Emile* and the *Contrat social* "together make a single whole" and hence could be published together (ibid.). (Masters 1968, xiii)

It is important to sketch out the inter-relation of the individualistic and social strains of Rousseau's thought because (as I will show in my thesis, especially in Chapter Five) the Vicar and the Legislator are charged with bringing the two together in related but different ways. As I have said, the interrelation of these two sides was explicit in the two Discourses, but there are also themes in the Social Contract and Emile that bring them together. A prominent example, and the focus of this thesis, is the common, but differently focused concern with religion in the two books. At the end of the Social Contract, in "On Civil Religion," it is made clear that in attempts at creating a harmonious, well-ordered state, religion poses what is potentially the biggest obstacle to success. Rousseau's 'reformation', if achieved, would not only overcome this obstacle, but make religion an invaluable tool in providing divine sanction for the social contract and its laws. To establish both the potential political problems and benefits of religion as Rousseau presents it, Chapter One of my thesis consists of a straight-forward presentation of the main arguments in "On Civil Religion." My chief intent in Chapter One, besides establishing and outlining the interplay between religion and politics, is to illuminate a need that is made manifest in this purely political treatment of religion. Namely, for something persuasive on the spiritual level that corresponds with the politically preferable form of religion for individual members of the polity. This personal faith must be broadly engendered if the all-important 'civil religion' is ever to entrench itself.

In Chapters Two, Three, and Four, I analyze what appears to be Rousseau's contribution to filling this void on the individual spiritual level, "The Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" (referred to throughout this thesis simply as 'the Profession'). Chapter Two contains a consideration of the Profession's place in Emile, especially the problems (and insights) for a proper interpretation of the Profession that arise from Rousseau creating characters to both give and hear it. I also expand upon the important problem of what the proper role of reason should be in matters which it seems incapable of fully accounting for by itself. I believe that the recognition of this problem is crucial insofar as it lends legitimacy to the Vicar's self-proclaimed 'unphilosophic' approach. In Chapter Three, I draw out the key arguments and conclusions of the Vicar in order to clarify just what his position is, focusing on the material before the 'reaction' of the narrator (which effectively divides the Profession into two distinct parts, or halves). This first half contains most of what could be termed a 'profession', or an account of his 'positive' faith justified by reason. The second half consists mainly of practical and theological criticisms of established religions (especially Catholicism), based on the principles established in the first half. In Chapter Four, I take up the Vicar's invitation near the end of the Profession to judge 'for myself' what he has said, and begin critical analysis of the Vicar's own position. Apart from considering an alternative explanation as to the source of the conscience, I focus mainly on a major logical contradiction in his 'proof' of the existence of an afterlife. In that both the afterlife and conscience are matters central to the Vicar's faith, flaws in his treatment of these two phenomena have significant implications insofar as they cast doubt upon the status of

things linked to them, such as God, the good, and the soul. Having shaken some of branches in the Vicar's belief, I then turn to the consideration of what we are to make of the important issues in the Profession from the point of view of the subtle philosopher who is in actuality its creator. While the Profession may seem generally persuasive in regard to points that are clearly important to Rousseau, it also has objections that a reflective consideration would illuminate. This reflects, on the one hand, Rousseau's desire to generate a spirit of healthy, unequivocal faith through the example of the priest that he is incapable of sincerely professing himself insofar as he remains a philosopher; and, on the other hand, his desire as a philosopher to point us to deeper questions which could not come directly from the priest.[15]

There is speculation by some critics that Rousseau believes few if any of the ideas of the Profession he has crafted. Accordingly, my suggestion that he thinks it of such importance that it is essential reading for a Legislator would seem most implausible. In that a key part of my thesis is an attempt to determine what part the Profession plays in Rousseau's overall political project, I must address this charge: if it were just an insupportable tale told by a simple priest, after all, one would rightly conclude that there could be no significance for it in Rousseau's project. As I have said, I provisionally defend the Vicar's overall

[15] I would argue that this hesitation to profess belief in things he is not convinced of is not due only to his so-called 'love of truth'. Rather, the danger in committing to a position he is skeptical of for the sake of preserving others' faith is that anyone grasping only the flaws in the Profession might prematurely dismiss Rousseau if he suspects that he has not seen the flaws. The advantage to the chosen mode is that if someone doubts the Vicar's premises, they need not dismiss his conclusions as long

approach in Chapter Two, and endeavor to provide as coherent interpretation I can of the substance of the Profession in Chapter Three. These efforts are made to counter the claim that it is a thoroughly flawed position. To provide some credence for the importance of the Profession for Rousseau, I will cite the brief mention of it in his final book, The Reveries of a Solitary Walker, as it is helpful in establishing Rousseau's position regarding both the content of the Profession and its political significance. In the 'Third Walk', he describes a time of philosophic and spiritual turmoil in his life - similar in many ways to that of the Vicar - and says:

> The result of my painful seeking was approximately that which I have since set down in the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar," a work vilely prostituted and profaned among the present generation but which may one day make a revolution among men if good sense and good faith are ever reborn among them. (Reveries 34)

Rousseau indicates here that the Profession can be "approximately" seen as one that reflects his own beliefs. But since there is still this qualification (and the possibility of purely salutary dissembling in the quote on Rousseau's part), I will attribute the Profession entirely to the Vicar, and only speculate about Rousseau's intentions for it. As to the latter part of the quote, Rousseau clearly expresses faith in the political potential for this exposition of a poor priest's beliefs. Consequently, it would seem necessary in any comprehensive analysis of the Profession to consider its political implications as well as its independent validity. It is

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as they see Rousseau also supporting the conclusions, but with more profound and less obviously flawed premises.

with this in mind that I believe it necessary to begin and end my analysis of the Profession with chapters devoted chiefly to the consideration of the political importance of religion, and to keep in mind the inextricability of the polity and the individual throughout.

My last chapter will contain the insights that I have drawn from a comparison of the Profession and the material in the Social Contract pertaining to religion. It will begin by introducing the Legislator, and then compare the requirements of his task with the example set by the Vicar. Through an ensuing examination of the key parts from "On Civil Religion" and selected points from the second, more practical and political half of the Profession, I will attempt to derive an understanding of Rousseau's general thoughts on how religion and faith fit into his political philosophy, especially regarding what lesson the Legislator might learn from the Profession.

Chapter One

"- one always pays dearly and terribly when religions do not want to be a means of education and cultivation in the philosopher's hand but insist on having their own *sovereign* way, when they themselves want to be ultimate ends and not means among other means."

Friedrich Nietzsche, **Beyond Good and Evil** (63)

The political importance of religion for Rousseau is indicated by the longest and concluding chapter[16] of the Social Contract being devoted to the idea of a Civil Religion. His basic point in this chapter is that all current religions - especially Christian ones - run counter to political stability, and that this can and must be changed. The proper political solution, however, is not to marginalize religion's role, since irreligious citizens are not much more preferable than fanatics. Instead, the power of religion must be subsumed by and directed towards the state, to maintain support for the laws where self-interest and patriotism fall short.[17]

In this final chapter of his work, Rousseau begins with a cursory history of the relationship between politics and religion, which is important for our purposes insofar as he praises and criticizes various aspects of different types of regimes, and severely criticizes others. Rousseau characterizes the politics of antiquity as in effect equivalent to

[16] It is the last chapter of substance - there is a brief chapter entitled "Conclusion" which follows it. It is notable that the last thing Socrates tackles in the city in speech is also religion (Republic 427b-c).

[17] The importance of this for the Legislator, and the compatibility of this goal with the Profession, will be illustrated in Chapter Five.

theocracies, where each political group had its own Gods, and there was little distinction between political and theological considerations. While this served to unify peoples sufficiently, the inherent intolerance created problems whenever cultures mixed - a common enough occurrence then and an inescapable one today. This changed with the Roman Empire where, in allowing subjugated peoples to keep their Gods, "multitudes of Gods and cults" came to co-exist throughout the empire: "And that is how paganism in the known world finally became a single, identical religion" (SC 126).

The relative harmony of Roman polytheism ended, however, with Christianity. Rousseau explains that:

> It was under these circumstances that Jesus came to establish a spiritual kingdom on earth. By separating the theological system from the political system, this brought about the end of the unity of the state, and caused the internal divisions that have never ceased to stir up Christian peoples. (SC 126)

This originally meek and submissive sect eventually came into power:

> [A]nd soon this supposedly otherworldly kingdom was seen to become, under a visible leader, the most violent despotism in the world.
>
> However, since there has always been a prince and civil laws, this double power has resulted in a perpetual conflict of jurisdiction that has made any good polity impossible in Christian states, and no people has ever been able to figure out whom it was obligated to obey, the master or the priest. (SC 126)

Quite clearly, then, Rousseau sees the Pope and his clergy as a serious problem for a polity. This systemic incongruity between Catholicism and politics was seen by various figures before Rousseau, as proven by his examples of some attempts to resolve this dilemma - attempts which to his mind have not been successful.

The first, and apparently best case is that of Mohammed, whose response was to create an entirely new religion, one whose corresponding political system was implemented once the religion took root. Rousseau praises his system for its initial political-religious unity, but unfortunately the political side was not durable enough. Once "barbarians" took it over, the religious/political split returned. He then turns to the Kings of England and Czars of Russia, who altered and appropriated the established religion under the head of state. Their intention seems right in trying to subsume the Church under the state, but by simply putting themselves atop an established religion, they were constrained by its established rules and clergy.[18]

Rousseau then states that Hobbes is the only Christian author who saw that this tension between religion and politics must be resolved, but claims that Hobbes did not see that "the dominating spirit of Christianity was incompatible with his system, and that the interests of the priest would

[18] Rousseau interestingly describes their nationalizing of Christianity as flawed in that "They are not its legislators; they are only its princes" (127). By criticizing them on the grounds that they are not "legislators," not only does he indicate that they should be more like the Legislator of the Social Contract, but he seems to suggest that this Legislator's role would include founding a new national religion along with the laws in order to avoid the partial successes of these previous would-be Legislators.

always be stronger than the state" (SC 127).[19] The autonomy of priests over our souls, along with the other-worldly focus of Christianity generally, has pernicious political consequences which Rousseau roundly criticizes throughout the chapter. When you combine this with his statement in the next paragraph that "a state has never been founded without religion serving as its base" (SC 127), it seems that religion is indispensable for creating a regime, but apparently Christianity cannot be the form of worship. Something new must be used, then, but before explaining anything about what that might be, Rousseau looks at religion generally.

Rousseau divides religion into two types, then adds a "bizarre" third kind. The main two are the religion of the man, and the religion of the citizen, which are also described respectively as "natural divine right" and "civil or positive divine right". They apparently mirror the "general or particular" nature of society. The third type, which he considers first, is the religion of the priest, also described as being of a "mixed and unsocial

[19] It is not immediately clear whether he means that Hobbes' system is especially unsuited for Christianity, or if the problem is with Christianity and any political regime. He goes on after this point to launch a full criticism of the principles of Christianity, but it seems that he is talking about that "saintly" form that is actually impossible to achieve on any grand scale. As for the actual manifestations of the religion, while he makes it clear that Catholicism is too flawed to work, he suggests here (and states outright at the end of an earlier version of the Social Contract called the "Geneva Manuscript") that Protestantism is the best of all existing religions (SC 201). There are various elements of Protestantism that make it more compatible with states, but the chief one is without question the fact that there is no powerful and autonomous head of the Church to compete with the political one. The point here seems to be that a new religion must be created, and yet near the end of the chapter he says that an "exclusive national religion" can never again be. This problem will arise again in Chapter Five when I discuss what the Legislator should make of what the Vicar and Rousseau say regarding the different religions, and how suitable the Vicar's natural religion is for the Legislator's purposes.

right that has no name" (SC 128). It is disparaged because it divides a man's loyalties between Church and state, thereby causing a contradiction which makes him unable to be both a devout man and citizen.[20] Catholicism and Buddhism are cited as examples, and Rousseau's concern with the division that they cause is made clear when he declares: "Everything that destroys social unity is worthless. All institutions that put man in contradiction with himself are worthless" (SC 128).

He then evaluates the religion of the citizen, and his praise for it sums up his reasons for making religion necessary in a good polity. Essentially, uniting God and the State makes one willing to do anything for it, and all the more hesitant to do anything against it. This unified force has its potential problems as well, however, and his criticisms here are equally illuminative of his fears about national religions. The first point Rousseau makes in this latter regard is that any existing strong national religion is "based on error and falsehood," in that it must deceive to gain true allegiance. He does not elaborate, but his point would seem to be that the allegiance it is based upon requires the nation to think itself chosen or

[20] An immediate problem is raised here in that being a devout citizen would seem to entail a potential contradiction with being a devout man. With respect to this problem, I would suggest that Rousseau sees the tension between these two as an inherent and unavoidable element of the human condition. Rousseau indicates, however, that this tension is not only manageable in the right regime, but can potentially be turned into a mutually supporting force in that being a good citizen in a good regime can make the best and happiest man, who in turn can make the best citizen. For preliminary proof that Rousseau believed this possible I would point to his oft repeated praise of Sparta and the virtuous Spartan. The tension created by a politically conflicting religion, on the other hand, is unnecessary. This is not to say that in a terrible regime the existence of an unpolitical religion cannot have good effects (although Hobbes might disagree), but insofar as this external religion makes unity in the state impossible, it is inherently disruptive and thus to be avoided.

favoured by God. He adds that the religion of the citizen makes people "credulous, superstitious, and drowns the cult of divinity in empty ceremonial" (SC 128). The most serious problem raised here, however, is that it tends to create intolerance, which is Rousseau's primary concern with national religions. He concludes his consideration of the religion of the citizen with the observation that a strong religious patriotism can easily lead to a bloodthirsty fanaticism, which is in turn "very harmful to its own security."

The religion of man remains, and Rousseau characterizes this as the original, "of the Gospel" Christianity, that "saintly, sublime, true religion" where men "all acknowledge one another as brothers" (SC 128). Lovely for individuals perhaps, but very problematic politically, because not only does it remove any sacred authority from the laws of a polity, it weakens the concern for and thus influence of the state by detaching men from this world. 'Patriotism' would mean nothing to a pure Christian. He would be devoted to God, not country, and consider all men equally his brothers, not feel a special relationship with his fellow citizens. For this reason, Christianity is necessarily detrimental to the state, regardless of its saintliness and beauty. Rousseau is most expansive in treating this criticism, his basic point being that while 'true' Christians may indeed be good people, their lack of concern for this life makes them very susceptible to slavery, insofar as their passivity can be easily manipulated by an ambitious man. Their faith in providence makes them indifferent to any political concerns, and while this is advantageous to a regime in keeping them from being rebellious, it also keeps them from being willing to do anything to defend the state; while they may be willing to die, they

are also not sufficiently concerned about the conditions they live under to be willing to kill. On this view, one earthly ruler is really no different than another, and they are accordingly averse to doing anything - even for a just king in defence of a good country - that may displease the heavenly ruler who teaches them to turn the other cheek. Not only would this pure Christianity be accordingly undesirable, but also practically impossible, since this degree of docility seems to go far beyond the limits of human nature as generally manifested. As Rousseau says, "a society of true Christians would no longer be a society of men" (SC 128). And regarding those individuals who may be capable of approximating it, he declares that "True Christians are made to be slaves" (SC 130).

Having given what is in effect a scathing critique of Christianity, Rousseau now claims to set "political considerations aside" in order to "return to right and determine its principles concerning this important point" (SC 130). By political considerations, he presumably means what is practical and useful in regard to a proposed system, not what is true (so far as this can be determined by human reason) and/or what is in accordance with civic Right (as per the Social Contract). Given that the sovereign is concerned only with people behaving as good citizens, what a person might truly believe is of no concern so long as their actions are those of a good citizen. As has been made clear earlier, though, it is important to have people believing in a religion that supports the laws. Christianity in general is flawed because of its other-worldly emphasis, and Catholicism in particular is presented as a political plague because of the mixed allegiance for its believers between the Pope and King. This brings us to the need for an established civil religion, based upon a "purely

civil profession of faith." This phrase (as well as its content) recalls another Profession, and as we now turn to the civil religion that Rousseau creates to resolve the problems of religion and politics, it is important to keep in mind both the Vicar's profession and the task of the Legislator.

In stressing that the profession in the Social Contract is "purely civil," it is clear that it is Rousseau's version of what is essential to the "religion of the citizen." He specifically states that the articles of this faith "are for the sovereign to establish, not exactly as religious dogmas, but as sentiments of sociability without which it is impossible to be a good citizen or a faithful subject" (SC 130). The sovereign should not be concerned here, then, with what truly makes up a person's "internal cult," or the "religion of the man," since politically this would be a fruitless exercise;[21] instead, he is concerned exclusively with actions.

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[21] This is not to say that the state is not responsible for promoting certain forms of worship, or more importantly responsible for cultivating the beliefs of the citizens through education and censorship (a subject that will arise in my later consideration of the Legislator). It is simply to say that the result of the state's efforts to persuade the citizen is not anything that the state has a right to hold the citizen responsible for. As Rousseau indicates, if he is honest and confesses his disbelief he should politely be sent away for the good of both himself and the city, but if he is dishonest and his actions (including the actions of speaking and writing) betray him after professing the civil faith, he should be considered an enemy of the state and punished as all high treason is. A third option for a non-believer would be to keep his opinions to himself but act as a good citizen anyway, for which there can be no punishment from any sovereign of this world. Most people, of course, would simply be believers of the only faith they were ever exposed to.

He then outlines what the dogmas of this civil religion would be, saying that they ought to be simple, precise, and without need of explanation. They are:

> The existence of a powerful, intelligent, beneficent, foresighted, and providential divinity; the afterlife; the happiness of the just; the punishment of the wicked; the sanctity of the social contract and the laws. (SC 131)

Whether we agree with them or not, these points are all fairly straightforward - except the last, which does not so obviously fit with the rest. The notion that "the social contract and the laws" are divinely sanctioned is not one that we see in religions *per se*, but would be considered an essential part of any nationalized religions (though usually in the form of the sanctity of the authority of the divinely chosen King, rather than the social contract). It is not unusual, then, for this to be included, nor surprising since Rousseau's religion is to support the state above all. At the same time, it is not necessarily true merely because it makes sense politically, and so it may be criticized for granting a dangerous kind of divine status to the laws - and accordingly to the legislative body. However, in that it comes in a book where the fear of tyranny has been dealt with by making the people itself the sovereign, it is not unreasonable to request a pledge of divinely authorized allegiance since the threat of divisive and subversive factions has replaced tyranny as the main concern in this regime. The divine aspect of this allegiance, as I will show in Chapter Five, is also important for the Legislator in creating the initial agreement.

After going through the positive dogmas, he cites the one negative dogma: the eradication of intolerance. This, he says, is what excludes many of the 'cults' - so named because a 'religion', in being sincerely devoted to God, would apparently have to be tolerant. Tolerance was discussed earlier as a negative consequence of the religion of the citizen, and Rousseau thinks that it is of enough importance to end his chapter with consideration of it. It flows out of the flaw in most organized religions, namely that its followers think themselves to be God's chosen people - a notion that becomes even stronger when combined with political unity. But political and theological unity in the form of an "exclusive national religion" is, Rousseau declares, no longer possible (SC 131), and so this intolerance inevitably causes civil discord, since "It is impossible to live in peace with those whom one believes are damned" (SC 131). Accordingly, it is important to tolerate all tolerant religions, which do not infringe upon their member's ability to be good citizens. If these religions are not tolerated, their adherents' allegiance will be shifted to the Church from the state, since one will surely perform duties required by God before those demanded by the Sovereign when there is a clear conflict.

Due to their ability to create this conflict, and because of other factors, the rulers of an organized Church, even with the King at the head, will have some power outside the law. This must be minimized and properly managed in any successful regime. In a footnote here, Rousseau cites as an example the right of endorsing the important civil contract of marriage as a powerful tool that the clergy "inevitably usurps in any intolerant religion" (SC 131). They can then rule over "inheritances, offices, the citizens, the state itself," by who is or is not married, and thus

who is or is not a bastard (which, of course, until recently were both important distinctions). The power of excommunication is another tool that is mentioned in an earlier footnote as a "political masterpiece" in that it serves to make the clergy "master of peoples and Kings" (SC 127). These are the kinds of things that clearly detract from, if not destroy, the cohesiveness of the state and as such cannot be permitted.

In saying that all religions which are tolerant and do not conflict with the state are to be tolerated, the criterion of tolerance combined with the examples cited above show that some religions would not qualify without significant and unlikely change: most notably, Catholicism. This is made explicit in the last paragraph of the chapter when he warns that "whoever dares to say that *there is no salvation outside of the church* should be chased out of the State, unless the State is the Church, and the prince is the pontif" (SC 131-2). He then mentions Henry IV (of France), who apparently decided to be Catholic since if the more tolerant Protestants turned out to be right he would get into heaven anyway. Rousseau proceeds to declare that this intolerance is the reason that Roman Catholicism should be abandoned, not adopted. It is clear that the main political problems posed by religion are all evident in Catholicism, and apparently improved by the various forms of Protestantism,[22] but how

[22] In the "Geneva Manuscript", Rousseau discusses the problem I referred to with Catholic intolerance regarding marriage in a section entitled "The Marriage of Protestants" (which, in that draft, made up the final chapter). He concludes the section, and entire manuscript, with: "Experience teaches us that of all the Christian sects, Protestantism, as the wisest and the gentlest, is also the most peaceful and social. It is the only one in which the laws can maintain their domain and the leaders their authority" (SC 201). Since this is removed from the final draft, I am hesitant to give it too much authority, but it should not be dismissed either. Rousseau was also

suitable Protestantism could be, and where other religions would fit, is not so clear.

To conclude, then, in "On Civil Religion" Rousseau calls for a major change in how religion relates to politics, gives the reasons why, and outlines what the proper relationship should be. This all may be fine and good as political analysis, but it is severely lacking in prescriptive possibilities, in that people are not going to change their present faith simply because it makes sense politically. Also, as Rousseau makes clear, what a person believes cannot be legislated. Hence, what is needed is a coherent, persuasive account of why a citizen should believe in the civil articles of faith and the corresponding civic religion. His focusing on 'the religion of the citizen' indicates that this presentation is consciously one-sided. Accordingly, it leaves the Legislator who is to put the contract in place only with a goal, but not the means for getting there. This character now requires a lesson illustrating the principles of a 'religion of the man' which would correspond with the proper 'religion of the citizen'. I intend to show, especially in Chapters Three and Five, that this is what the Profession provides, and that the Savoyard Vicar and his teachings are meant to be instructive for the Legislator in his efforts to enact the regime Rousseau recommends. Not only is the Savoyard Vicar's natural religion compatible with these political considerations, but as I will argue in Chapters Two, Three and Four, it also corresponds with what is philosophically valid.

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well aware of the English Civil War a century earlier; he clearly means only to point to the *potential* in Protestantism for relatively good political order.

Having illustrated the political need for something like the Profession, I will now turn to introducing how the Profession exposes and addresses an inescapable problem that is posed to philosophy by what one could call religion, but which is more precisely the desire or even need to have an adequate account of the first and highest things.

Chapter Two

"The harshest daylight, rationality at any cost, life bright, cold, circumspect, conscious, without instinct, in opposition to the instincts, has itself been no more than a sickness, another form of sickness - and by no means a way back to 'virtue', to 'health', to happiness.... To *have* to combat one's instincts - that is the formula for *décadence*: as long as life is *ascending*, happiness and instinct are one.-"

Friedrich Nietzsche, **Twilight of the Idols**, The Problem of Socrates (11)

This chapter is primarily a prelude to Chapters Three and Four, where the material in the Profession is presented and analyzed. In addition to making some necessary observations regarding the relation of the Profession to the rest of Emile, it is important to establish first the legitimacy of its apparently 'unphilosophic' and certainly (in both senses) 'unorthodox' approach towards the profoundly philosophic subject matter it deals with. I will leave the consideration of the Vicar's own arguments for his method until the next chapter. Here I hope to open the reader to a third way by roughly outlining some reasons why both the theological and purely rational approaches do not suffice, and why Rousseau himself seems to support this notion. I indicated in the Introduction where the Profession might fit into Rousseau's political project in its support of divine morality, and demonstrated in Chapter One the importance of developing a divinely-sanctioned morality in "On Civil Religion." I believe that the Profession contains more than a 'salutary message', however, and in this chapter my chief goal is to give a provisional defense for the philosophic validity of the Profession.

Before embarking on any interpretive quest regarding the Profession, one must account for its curious placement in Emile. I will do this by looking at the material immediately surrounding it in Emile, citing some essential references from Rousseau's later works, and most importantly through a consideration of why giving it a different tone and attributing it to a different author might be pedagogically necessary. As it is entirely beyond the scope of this work to take up any comprehensive consideration of Emile, I will concern myself with it only insofar as the title character clearly contrasts with the troubled youth we find addressed in the Profession.[23]

Where and how there is a divergence between the two young men is a likely place to get some indication of the purpose of the Profession. This

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[23] I acknowledge that it is surely impossible to get a fully accurate interpretation of the Profession without a thorough understanding of Emile. Even a comparison between the youths is problematic insofar as one should first know what Rousseau's intentions are for Emile. For example, is his being a good father and citizen the extent of Emile's potential, or does Rousseau plan on him having the capacities of a philosopher, or a king? In my defense, however, it would seem likewise impossible to interpret Rousseau's meaning in this work about divine matters properly without a thorough understanding of all of Rousseau's works, or for that matter all things understood by a mind as great as Rousseau's. We must start somewhere, though, and since the implications of the Profession seem to be more obviously pertinent to parts of the Social Contract, I think it more important to consider them sufficiently than the rest of Emile. I regret, however, that I am unable to give proper consideration to the Profession's place in Emile and in Emile's development. Its being situated amidst the discussion of pity, the passions, and the various developments of Book Five, for example, strikes me as something that clearly merits further investigation. It cannot be doubted that as far as Rousseau's general thought or "project" is concerned, Emile stands as perhaps the most important contribution, especially in the fundamental philosophic (as opposed to the secondary political) regard. My insufficient discussion and understanding limits my analysis accordingly.

contrast is made clear in the introduction[24] to the Profession where the youth is described; his moral and spiritual destitution is something Emile would not seem to be capable of (or at least has been most carefully protected from). Emile is set apart from all youths shortly after the Profession when Rousseau says:

> You will always picture him as similar to your young people... I, comparing my pupil to yours, hardly find anything that they can have in common. Since they are reared so differently, it would almost be a miracle if Emile resembled yours in anything. (315b)

Given this, a simple explanation would be that by turning to the education of someone other than the improbable if not purely imaginary Emile, Rousseau indicates that this teaching would be suitable for most youths, or at least the many troubled ones produced by modernity. This is problematic, however, in that the rest of the book is presumably not filled only with lessons for raising an impossibly 'pure' Emile, but instead teachings that can be variously striven for in guiding anyone, including oneself. The opposite is also possible; namely, that the shift in audience suggests that the teaching on natural religion is aimed at the average youth, and not the quite unaverage Emile. This is not plausible either, however, in that even the above-mentioned quote (stressing Emile's uniqueness) is brought up while Rousseau is explaining how the principles of natural religion enrapture Emile, make him love the good, and make him love God

[24]In speaking of the 'introduction', I am referring to the material from the Latin quote "Incedo per ignes/Suppositos cineri doloso" (p.260) to the title of the Profession. The inclusion of an engraving by Rousseau at this quote (such engravings otherwise appear only at the beginning of Books 1-3 and 5) is an indication that he considers the section to begin here, and thus a study of the Profession must include this material.

in a way that the reader (and presumably the reader's pupil) could not understand. A clear indication of the suitability of this teaching for Emile comes in the important paragraph right after the Profession. Immediately following his claim that these ideas are not meant to be a 'rule' in religious matters but (in a suspiciously understated way) described as *just an example of how to reason* about religion, Rousseau says:

> So long as one concedes nothing to the authority of men or to the prejudices of the country in which one was born, the light of reason alone cannot, in the education founded by nature, lead us any farther than natural religion. This is what I limit myself to with my Emile. If he must have another religion, I no longer have the right to be his guide in that. It is up to him alone to choose it. (313)

Obviously, the difference is not that the religious teaching is directed at common folk, and not to Emile. Instead, Rousseau says that natural religion - which seems to be the main subject of the Profession - is persuasive for Emile in a way that it would not be for our thoughtless, flighty, young people (315). If this is the case, then, strangely, the one lesson in Emile not taught to Emile would be a lesson he learns in a way the rest of us seem incapable of.

One way to get ourselves out of this conundrum is to consider that there is more to the Profession than natural religion - namely a political teaching that Rousseau thinks necessary to apply to people, but which would not be necessary with Emile. This is suggested in two ways by the last passage quoted, which follows the Profession. The first is the claim that the universal superiority of natural religion is limited to the instances

where "the authority of men" and "the prejudices of the country in which one was born" have been removed (313b). These are two things that have never arisen in Emile's situation, whereas they could not conceivably be absent from the formation of any actual individuals. The second is Rousseau's declaration that if Emile is to "have another religion I can no longer be his guide in that" (314a). This freedom to choose is something not encouraged by the Vicar, who is very clear at the end of the Profession that the youth should return to the faith in which he was born: not because it is the best one (though it apparently is), but because this is the most sensible course of action in principle (310a). This principle will be discussed in Chapter Five; it is notable, however, that Rousseau does not apply it to Emile. Let it suffice to propose here that the *pure natural religion* is suitable only for the *pure natural man* that is Emile. [25] Its persuasiveness aside, for civilized men there must be a commixture of some sort between on the one hand the practicalities of organized religion, political life, and whatever tools are necessary for generating shared opinions, and on the other the theoretical faith that ultimately must be personal.

This issue of a political side implicit in the Profession, as I have noted, will be left until Chapter Five. However, I do need to address Rousseau's own relation - as a political philosopher - to the Profession. To say that there is an important political teaching in the Profession is not to suggest that it is not at the same time a sincere "profession" of faith. To do so would be to ignore the general approval Rousseau lends the sentiments

[25] Rousseau says in "On Civil Religion" that a true Christian would no longer be a man (SC 128). The same might be said of a 'true' Emile.

before and after they are given. It would also be to ignore the possibility - one that I will argue for throughout - that the 'true' or 'divine' good is inseparable from political health. There is nonetheless a problem with attributing any sincerity of belief to Rousseau, since he gives the authorship to someone else. The rest of this chapter will be a consideration of why Rousseau creates the Vicar, and what this means for our interpretation of the Profession. In doing this, I intend to establish that we should be wary of dismissing any of the arguments as *merely* 'salutary'. The reason for this, in essence, is that the salutary is determined by the good of the polity and exists in the realm of action. It therefore becomes significant insofar as we cannot attain certain and comprehensive truth about the highest things, and yet, as members of a polity, must inevitably act according to our best opinions about them.

The manner in which Rousseau introduces the Profession is quite convoluted. It is a *transcription* of a *paper* written about a *profession*, given by a generous, good, disfavoured priest to a troubled youth and eventually passed on to Rousseau. Despite the many hands that this story has supposedly gone through, however, Rousseau will "guarantee the facts that are going to be reported." The troubled youth, as said earlier, is not Emile and is radically different in important respects; instead he appears to match a description of a young Rousseau - although this is not made

explicit.[26] What is more important is to consider the relationship between Rousseau and the Vicar, since it is the Vicar's ideas we are examining. In the introduction to the Profession, Rousseau[27] vows that they are not his thoughts. Immediately after the Profession, he says that "I have transcribed this writing not as a rule for the sentiments that one ought to follow in religious matters, but as an example of the way one can reason with one's pupil in order not to diverge from the method I have tried to establish" (313b). Though he denies both authorship and authoritativeness in these statements, his subtly understated addition after the quote just

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[26] As it is not made explicit, I will not assume it (as most commentators do), though I think the issue is ultimately of little consequence. Although Rousseau's later description of his own youth in the Confessions matches that of this young fugitive in many ways, it is also different in some obvious ways - the shift from France to Italy being one. Rousseau gives the impression that he is the youth when it is said "I am tired of speaking in the third person. And the effort is quite superfluous, for you are well aware, dear fellow citizen, that this unhappy fugitive is myself" (p.264). It is not Rousseau speaking here, though, but the Genevan who he says authored the story who is admitting to Rousseau that the young expatriate who supposedly told him the story is actually himself. This, combined with the continuation of the quotations (at least in the editions I am familiar with) makes it clear that Rousseau has not officially identified himself as the youth. While these twists may be intended to indicate that he is the character while avoiding any persecution – a possibility that will be examined shortly - insofar as the boy only listens and we are not told what his final thoughts are after he goes off to consider what has been said, it would not seem necessary. As to his actual youth, we read in the posthumously published Confessions that Rousseau modeled the Vicar after two priests from his youth (III, pp. 92-3, 118), but it certainly seems he used their characters much more than their beliefs. Consequently, I think we should assume that the Profession is entirely Rousseau's creation, though not entirely his own profession. There is nonetheless a significant similarity between the youth and the young Rousseau we meet in the Confessions, and I will suggest later that as with Rousseau's partial identification with the beliefs of Vicar, his doing so with the youth is instructive, especially in regard to the reaction to the Profession that the youth shares in the interlude.

[27] A final complication to the narration in this Symposium-like set-up is that between 'Rousseau' and 'Jean-Jacques' - the latter being how the tutor to Emile is addressed. Though there may be significance to the difference between these two characters (who in a later work carry on a dialogue), for the sake of convenience I have treated them in my analysis as interchangeable.

cited that while the Profession's ideas are only an example, "the light of reason cannot take us any farther than natural religion," along with his praise for their actual expositor as "a man more worthy than I," and the support from the Reveries cited earlier in my Introduction, all combine to give the impression his own ideas are not far off.

It should first be noted that Rousseau felt the need to put Emile aside for the Profession, and since his role in the book is to teach Emile, it would make sense to remove himself as well. Another reason for this may simply be that Rousseau knows that he is openly criticizing and even refuting the Catholic religion, and as such these qualifications are intended to absolve him of the charge of heresy. It is quite conceivable that this is a consideration for him, but that it is the main one is implausible for a number of reasons. First, if he is trying to stay out of trouble, he is not doing the best job of it, as his general approval of the Profession is fairly overt. For example, the kind of praise he gives of its 'accordance with reason' (cited above) which immediately follows the Profession should not even be necessary; its 'accordance with reason' should be evident to anyone capable of reasoning. Even without the comments he makes in favor of it, just giving the space he does to the Profession (or that he included it in his book at all) should serve as testament enough to his respect for the position. Were he altering the course of his book so drastically just to avoid trouble while still providing the argument, then a firm rejection of it, at least on the surface, would be necessary. Secondly, as he relates in the Confessions, Rousseau suspected his book might be censored by those who would be negatively affected by the good sense of it. However, far from this influencing him not to publish it, or have it

published after his death, his reaction was simply that he would have to have it published outside of Catholic France.[28] A final possibility as to why he would create the Vicar to give this Profession, rather than straightforwardly giving his own, is one I hope to establish in this chapter as the most insightful: namely, that as a subtle political philosopher he had instructive reasons for shifting the tone away from Jean-Jacques and Emile to a "good priest" and a "troubled youth".

In my Introduction, I indicated that in Rousseau's 'project' he clearly attacks both the modern clergy and his contemporary intellectuals as corrupted and corrupters of society. In his reprisal of the 'gadfly' role immortalized by Socrates, he stings people to an awareness of the deep problems with both of these influential parties. In the days of the original 'gadfly', the subrational respect for civic virtue, or civic piety, was strong. Being other-than-rational, however, it occasionally led the polity to support unjust things in the name of piety.[29] Socrates seems to have

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[28] He apparently only allowed it to be published in France because he was led to believe that the censor approved it. See Confessions, X, pp. 520-540.

[29] Socrates' execution generally, but especially the dialogue on piety ("Euthyphro") seem to be where Plato most fully demonstrates the flaws in and potentially terrible effects of the irrational, superstitious, and thus unpredictable nature of contemporary opinion in its abuse of the gods (or of people's piety anyway). I would also cite Thucydides as a source for understanding the problems of ancient piety. Nicias' superstitious decision not to leave Syracuse because of a lunar eclipse shines as the most fateful example of the tragedies which can be caused by the defiance of reason out of misguided piety. On the other side, of course were the 'Sophists', the consideration of whom brings Socrates and Rousseau closer together. The key difference between these 'gadflies' is in who is lulling the polity to sleep regarding its

wanted to realign and solidify the polity's idea of virtue by 'blending in' more reason - and the healthy awareness of ignorance which accompanies it - thereby making the opinions of the polity more consistent and closer to true virtue. Plato makes abundantly clear, however, that while the goal is a place for reason in society, he does not think that the general rule of reason in everything (or universal 'enlightenment') is a possibility. In Rousseau's time, as I have argued, this element of Plato's teaching seems forgotten. The Enlightenment was approaching the opposite extreme from that faced by Socrates; namely, one of too much faith in reason - the product of which was something like what I described as 'pseudo' ignorance. As I indicated in the Introduction, "I know that I know nothing" is not a position that an entire society can rely upon as a guiding opinion. As the gadfly, then, Rousseau felt the need to 'blend in' more respect for subrational sentiment, which was so necessary for healthy opinion insofar as patriotism and civic virtue needed to be rekindled. These qualities, in turn, would lend primacy to the polity's welfare in the calculations of an individual's interest - as opposed to rationality, which too often leads individuals elsewhere. Piety's essential role in this task is demonstrated in "On Civil Religion." Patriotism and all it entails relies on sentimental attachment, a kind of unthinking allegiance to the fatherland, which is vastly strengthened by faith in the polity's accordance with or embodiment of something like 'divine laws'. According to Rousseau, the ancient form of this allegiance had first been undercut in its transformation by the independent Christian Church (SC 126), and was now being eradicated entirely by the godless modern scientific project.

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dangers: in Rousseau's time it seems to have been much more the sophists than the misguidedly pious.

It is evident in looking at the First Discourse and his later 'confessional' works that Rousseau considered the scientists and rationalists (for perhaps the first time in history) as the evil a responsible lover of truth must oppose. That this fight is also central to the Vicar - even above that of intolerant religions - is evident in the last few pages of the Profession. After the Vicar's lengthy critical analysis of miracles, revelation, and organized, hierarchical religion generally, he indicates that Jesus' original message as portrayed in the Gospels is a beautiful foundation. In the ensuing contrast made between the Gospels' account of Jesus and the writings spawned by Socrates, the Vicar seems to be saying, "Despite the many, seemingly unavoidable flaws in Christianity and organized religion generally, the flaws in the modern philosophic project, and philosophy[30] generally, are even more flawed. And, what is worse, philosophy does not even have the potential as a source of virtue or solace, for at least some followers, that Christianity does." This is confirmed in looking at how the Profession closes: with an unqualified attack on the adherents of the intolerant religion of philosophy. It is a plea to the youth not to fall into the trap of vain, floundering, barren, dogmatic skepticism that these abusers of learning so easily succumb to. The vehemence of the

[30] It appears to me that the Vicar does not adequately consider the differences between ancient and modern philosophy. Given that he focuses almost exclusively on moderns, and charges them with many of the same faults that Rousseau reserves exclusively for his contemporaries, I think it fair to assume that Rousseau has not endowed his good priest with a full understanding of philosophy, beginning with Plato and his cohorts. My provisional view is that Rousseau presents the Vicar as a kind of alternative to Platonism - sharing many of its more evident elements, but directing them at everyman in a way that directly challenges not Plato, but the Enlightenment in their attempt at 'bringing light into the cave'.

Vicar's objection to this group, and more importantly their pernicious effects, is clear when he says:

> Under the haughty pretext that they alone are enlightened, true, and of good faith, they imperiously subject us to their peremptory decisions and claim to give us as the true principles of things the unintelligible systems they have built in their imaginations. Moreover, by overturning, destroying, and trampling on all that men respect, they deprive the afflicted of the last consolation of their misery...They say that the truth is never harmful to men. I believe it as much as they do, and in my opinion this is a great proof that what they teach is not the truth. (312)

The Vicar's sentiments here mirror those of Rousseau in the lengthy footnote which begins at the end of the above quote. Both stress that philosophy can be just as dogmatic as religion, but without the potential boon to morality. Instead, philosophy will likely, if not inevitably, harm it. Both close with the declaration that the truth cannot be harmful - thus when philosophy is, it does not teach the truth.

In the opening of Emile, Rousseau says that two things must be considered in any project: the absolute goodness of it, and the practicability of it. While finding the truth of all things, including that of the very best life, may be good in principle, Rousseau clearly thinks that the Enlightenment project - in attempting to universalize the philosophic quest - falls far short in the second regard. As such, the 'absolute goodness' of it need not even be discussed (and should certainly not be praised) even by one who considers it good for himself. The importance of something having the evident potential to be practically done is

illustrated in the long footnote at the end of the Profession, where Rousseau goes so far as to indicate a preference for bloodthirsty fanaticism over the indifference to the good generated by philosophy. At least fanaticism "elevates the heart of man" and in fact needs only to be "better directed to produce the most sublime virtues" (312). This brings us back to the observations made above regarding how important a role piety plays in the goodness of a regime. The Vicar makes clear that the skeptical condition required for philosophy is one that people cannot maintain for long. Given, then, that people will always believe in something, what is important is that their faith, or other-than-rational tendencies, be directed towards something good, not something which engenders "indifference to the good."

To help set the stage for the Vicar, and make the link between his beliefs and Rousseau's more solid, I would point out that the necessity of acting in ignorance is not unique to 'society' or 'the many'. Even philosophers, when they act, have to rely on something like inner sentiment or faith. Often there is not time enough to think out important issues until they meet any test of absolute truth. Indeed, in the case of divine things, there may never be enough time to arrive at the truth of them. It seems that, as humans, we are incapable of resolving many of these mysteries. Consequently, *everyone* has to act on opinion, not merely 'the many'. Accordingly, the goal would seem to be to get the best opinion possible, while always remembering that what one is acting on is, at best, only a reflection of the good and the just, not the things themselves.

Actions are invariably governed by politics. Even if the sovereign has decided to grant us the freedom to decide what to do in a given circumstance, this choice is still the sovereign's, and invariably subject to some limits. Our inclinations and decisions as to how to act are also affected by the sovereign in its guidance of opinions in the polity through its laws and education. As the Vicar makes clear, and as Rousseau emphasizes in "On Civil Religion," the belief in a providential and just God is a strong influence in persuading an individual to perform his duties. This clearly benefits the state, but insofar as these duties are not simply illusions but inherent and/or divine rules, fulfilling them is also the only way to ensure individual happiness. Herein lies the rub, however, for if they are not in fact divine or inherent, they might simply be recommendations whereby simple fools may live comfortably; or ways to be "good" but not to be great. The Vicar says at one point that without the existence of this just God, the "good" man is indeed a fool. I will show in Chapter 4, however, that this is not necessarily his and certainly not Rousseau's final word on the subject.

To counter the approach of the pernicious philosophers, the Vicar 'argues' for the authority of something other than pure reason; namely, certain inner sentiments. One dilemma he faces is that to do so he must establish and appeal to the authority of the senses, but do so through rational speech. This is not, however, as problematic as it may first appear. All reasoning has to have something to reason about. The Vicar

contends that our inner experiences are at least as legitimate as external evidence and products of creative imagination. He is not saying that we should live solely based on feeling, but that our sentiments should be factored into our reasoning, as opposed to automatically explaining them away as something inherently base and thus something to overcome. There are undoubtedly feelings we have which are base, but reason should be used as the tool to differentiate between those good and bad, not as the replacement for all natural inclination.

The more impact we allow subrational things have on our actions, the less effect rational arguments alone can have: they must succeed in making us *feel*, or *sense* that they are true. There is a mix of inclination and forethought in every action, and thus it becomes necessary to appeal to both, at least if real effects and not sophistical supremacy are the goal. This is where the Vicar starts from in saying, "Were all the philosophers to prove that I am wrong, if you sense that I am right, I do not wish for more" (289e). Though somewhat oversimplified, pure logic is sufficient only for Socrates, and the correct turning of desires such that reason becomes irrelevant is sufficient only for Emile. In the human cases, it is a combination of both *convincing the mind of* and *turning the desires towards* the appropriate things. One or the other being perfectly developed (as presented in Socrates and Emile) would be sufficient, but the rest of us are forced to make do with our constitutions already imperfect. Accordingly, to make us more virtuous, the Vicar appeals to both reason and sentiment, and leads us by example in his remarkable balance of the two.

Because conviction requires more than something that seems logically correct, the Vicar is justified in appealing primarily to the youth's heart instead of his head – while nonetheless proceeding to argue that his outlook is the most 'reasonable'. As the Vicar illustrates so well, reason is limited, and yet is indispensable. Not only is our reasoning sometimes mistaken, but it is fairly clear that it is insufficient to the task of understanding the most profound, yet most important things. These include some of the things that the Vicar deals with (about which we must decide what we believe) such as the existence of a soul, conscience, free will, order, the just, and others. Too often, people conclude that these things do not exist at all merely because they cannot understand them. As an example, there are people who do not think that humans have a 'soul' of any kind; that, rather, we are only very sophisticated animals, or ingenious, incredibly-complicated material mechanisms. While many would disagree, attempting to disprove the claim is far from simple, and may be impossible. Nonetheless, there is no reason to reject our conscious awareness of an immaterial soul merely because we cannot explain its mode of existence.

Another example would be the faith some people have that certain revelations (such as the Bible) are the word of God. This, or the existence of the soul, may simply be true whether it accords with the reasoning of 'the reasoner' or not. Accordingly, the reasoner cannot dismiss kinds of faith the way he can erroneous mathematical theorems, for in doing so he must presume that *his* reasoning is correct, rejecting

that of so many others.[31] No matter how 'reasonable' this presumption seems to him (and reflexively to anyone else of course), he must acknowledge that he can't prove it. Not only does he have a faith in *his* reasoning, but must have a faith in reason *as such* - despite the fact that it seems incapable of understanding some of the most fundamental aspects of the human condition. Although no questions are entirely beyond discussion and even argument (and in fact we might demand that reflection take place), ultimately he can only expect others to believe what is for them believable in the sincerity of their hearts.

I will turn now to the Vicar's attempt at making sense of these highest considerations, and the resulting revelation of his inner sentiment. My desire here has been to forestall a dismissal of his arguments because of his particular estimation of the appropriate balance between reason, sense, and faith. I hope to have shown, while also dealing with various interpretive necessities of the characters and the text, that one's approach to the peaks tackled in the Profession needs to be more than 'logical'. Or, put more precisely, with a logic that keeps in mind the limits of reason.

[31] See Strauss (1979) for a more thorough formulation of the unbridgeable gap between the two high grounds of the pure philosopher and theologian. Though I understand neither peak well enough to say that he is right, I find his case persuasive.

Chapter Three

> An action compelled by the instinct of life has in the joy of performing it the proof it is a *right* action: and every nihilist with Christian-dogmatic bowels understands joy as an *objection*...
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche, **The Anti-Christ** (11)

The Vicar begins his Profession with an explicit disclaimer: he warns that he will not engage in "learned speeches" nor "profound reasonings," and insists that "I am not a great philosopher and care little to be one. But I sometimes have good sense, and I always love the truth" (266d). He does not intend to convince the young listener that he possesses the truth so much as simply profess his beliefs as they are written in his heart, and leave the youth to consider their validity for himself. He acknowledges that he may indeed be mistaken, but adds that if the youth "were to be similarly mistaken, there would be little harm in that" (266d). He encourages the youth not only to reason about what he says, but to consult his heart, a theme that recurs throughout the Profession. Because logic alone, as I have indicated, is not sufficient for understanding either ourselves or God, the Vicar contends that we must rely on something like innate sensibility. Thus while he may not be trying to win any arguments, he does believe that his ideas are the most sensible.

The Vicar's rejection of both the philosophic and the orthodox religious approach is a crucial part of his outlook. The Vicar begins his

argument for their unacceptability at the outset of the Profession. After briefly explaining why he found organized religion lacking, and going to more significant lengths to explain why he found the books of philosophers useless, he describes the method he now follows - one which "exempts me from the vain subtlety of arguments," while allowing a very Rousseauian "love of truth as my whole philosophy" (269e). He resolved to:

> accept as evident all knowledge to which in the sincerity of my heart I cannot refuse my consent; to accept as true all that which appears to me to have a necessary connection with this first knowledge; and leave all the rest in uncertainty without rejecting it or accepting it and without tormenting myself to clarify it if it leads to nothing useful for practice. (270a)

This method replaces both orthodoxy and the radical skepticism that philosophy never helped him escape. I will consider the rationale of his method more fully below, but it is important to get a sense of it from the start - as the youth does from the Vicar.

Having established the character and limits of his intention for the Profession, the Vicar stresses its personal basis by relating some autobiographical background, focusing upon how it was he became a priest. There are similarities here to Rousseau's own criticism of organized religion from the chapter on civil religion, as the Vicar says he learned not what was true, but instead what had to be learned to be, in effect, fully indoctrinated and able to indoctrinate others. This is an echo of Rousseau's ideas regarding the contrast between the religion of man and that of the citizen. Recall that one criticism of the latter is that it is based

on error and falsehood.' This will either lead men astray - by, for example, creating intolerance - or if they see some of the errors, the result could be that they leave the teachings of the religion altogether, thereby abandoning the good along with the bad. We see the latter possibility presented by the Vicar himself as he describes a personal phase of troubling uncertainty - although judging from what he says after the fact he could never have stayed there.

The main development that seems to have shaken his faith in religion is the Church's doctrine of chastity for its priests. The subject of sex is very important at this stage in Emile. The Profession interrupts the development of Emile's passions in the book, and his quest for Sophie follows not long after. There seems to be a link between religion and sex both for Emile and the Vicar, though the meaning of it is difficult to discern. One possibility in the Vicar's case is that it is related to his turning towards sentiment as something purer, even more divine than reason.[32] Previous to the Profession in Book IV, Rousseau states that the passions are importantly innate in us, and that it is "an enterprise as vain as it is ridiculous to want to destroy them - it is to control nature, it is to reform the work of God" (212c). Here he adds the very Vicarian

[32] Allan Bloom discusses this subject in his Introduction, where he says that Rousseau "reveals sex to the young Emile as the Savoyard Vicar revealed God to the young Jean-Jacques" (20). He goes on to contrast the dualistic Vicar's sexual guilt with the unified Emile's vision of sex as divine, declaring this contrast indicative of the former's other-worldliness and the latter's focus on earthly rewards. I disagree with his appraisal - I detect no sincere guilt on the part of the Vicar, and if anything this demonstrates that his dualism is very much of this world.

statement that God writes "in the depths of his heart" what He wants man to do.[33]

The Vicar equates the Christian repression of sexual feelings with asking him "not to be a man" (267a). He then relates a cryptic confession of his 'manliness' and the scandal that was caused by his not remaining chaste. It appears that because the Vicar respected marriage (and was forbidden from marrying), he had sex with an unmarried girl, and perhaps got her pregnant.[34] He then explains that it was not so much his "incontinence" that got him in trouble, as it was his unwillingness to defile marriage, and, especially, his refusal to lie about being with the girl (and thereby "aggravate the fault"). The injustice evident in a religion and society that would treat him so badly for following a most natural inclination, and for refusing to engage in the genuinely immoral behaviours of lying and adultery, began a disenchantment which eventually left all the Vicar's beliefs overturned, and reduced him to the condition of radical doubt that Descartes demands for true learning. This was thus the fortuitous cause of his beginning to search for higher, or at least better, enlightenment. The third subject he turns to in the beginning of the Profession is something, which came up in his experience with sex -

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[33] See also 221b, where Rousseau links being as solitary as God with pure happiness, then paradoxically declares that only he who needs can love, and only he who loves can be happy.

[34] We do not know if it is a girl or girls (or even the use of prostitutes). In the Confessions, M. Gatier - one of the priests Rousseau says he modeled the Vicar on - had a similar problem when he got the girl he loved with child. We do not have the same assurance of 'monogamy' here, and might doubt it given the Vicar's use of the plural "faults" in describing what was exposed. I am indebted to Arthur Melzer for my better understanding of this cryptic confession, and Andy Muwais for sharing his notes from Professor Melzer's class on Emile in the fall of 1999.

namely conscience. It stood out by its silence, never reproaching him for his erotic activities despite the rules in his society - and stricter rules in his 'divine' vocation - condemning it.

CONSCIENCE

> "There was a lamp in there – light, don't you know – and outside it was so beastly, beastly dark. I went no more near the remarkable man who had pronounced a judgement upon the adventures of his soul on this earth. The voice was gone. What else had been there?"
>
> Joseph Conrad, **Heart of Darkness**

His seeing through the errors of his religion despite his intention to immerse himself in it brings him to the subject of an innate, pure guide which we know as conscience. The establishment of this subtle guide as not just existing, but divine, is the key to the whole Profession, since it is essentially through it that we are linked to God and are to understand what He requires of us. I will sketch the general case the Vicar makes for conscience before proceeding, because it is spread throughout his Profession, and relates to every major point.

One argument often used against conscience is that it is not natural but a product of the prejudices of society. In that many moralists, including the Vicar, use conscience as a main proof of the eternal, unchangeable principles of right and wrong, this criticism is potentially devastating to any system of morality depending on it. The Vicar's

extensive defense against this accusation begins in brief here, with the ironic observation that something within himself - which turns out to be this guide from God - combated the Catholic prejudice he was raised in and was actively trying to embrace. He concludes from this that:

> conscience persists in following the order of nature against all the laws of men. We may very well be forbidden this or that, but remorse always reproaches us feebly for what well-ordered nature permits us, and all the more for what it prescribes to us. (267b)

"Well-ordered nature" clearly prescribes reproduction for humans, and the inclination for sexual intercourse is the means by which nature ensures that this necessity is carried out. The Vicar is accusing the Catholic Church of, as Rousseau said above, wanting "to reform the work of God." He leaves further discussion of conscience for later, as he must first relate the developments and conclusions which led him to believe in the body/soul duality of humans and the existence of a just God who has given us the capacity to be good and happy. The logical arguments for the existence of something immaterial like a conscience and a soul for it to speak to, as well as the rationale behind why God might give us one, are both crucial parts of the overall system of the Vicar. However, I believe that the material regarding our immediate experience of conscience is a useful place to start. Accordingly, I will begin my exposition of the Profession by piecing together the various arguments given by the Vicar for establishing the existence of conscience within us.

The Vicar's argument against the claim that 'conscience is just a product of prejudice' is made in different ways, but variously points to conscience making itself heard *despite* our different kinds of prejudices. He cites the ancients' honourable standards of behaviour notwithstanding the immoral conduct of the gods they worshipped. The fact that moral instinct could not be corrupted by the example set by the gods, just as it could not be constrained by an invocation to chastity from the Church, leads the Vicar to declare that "the holy voice of nature" is stronger than even religion. This would certainly be an important observation in that it speaks against any idea of a religion's absolute sacredness - that is, irrespective of the content of its teaching - by making certain fundamental inclinations primary. The second substantial element of the Vicar's defense of the innateness of conscience comes further on in the Profession after his arguments demonstrating the goodness and authority of it. There, he points out that far from being the source of conscience, prejudice is its enemy in so far as it helps us ignore conscience at the most important times: when we have a selfish interest in or predisposition to doing something morally wrong, and lack any other guidance because of the errors of opinion in our society. This is where conscience is most needed, and where - despite the prejudices of our polity, religion, or self-interest - it still makes its presence felt.

Another essential claim pertaining to conscience that comes under attack is that it is universal to the human race. Differences in mores are cited against this claim, but it is fairly clear that certain essential ideas (several of the Ten Commandments come to mind) are almost universally agreed upon. In Rousseau's time, however, new 'uncivilized' peoples

were being discovered, and found to engage in practices that would appear to make the human conscience adaptable to anything. The Vicar's response to this is that even if some of these claims were true, the exceptions would prove the rule in the same way that a depraved individual without a conscience would within our society: the shock of the 'inhumanity' of the worst behaviours serves to demonstrate the universality of the standard we expect in humans. Were we to find a society where it is perfectly acceptable for teenage boys to beat their grandmothers, we would not say "oh, it's O.K., that's just the way they do things there" any more than if we found the practice commonly occurring in our neighbour's house. He thus refutes those who search for some obscure exception to the idea of conscience, "as if all the inclinations of nature were annihilated by the depravity of a single people" (289c).

As another demonstration of the power of conscience, the Vicar turns to one of Rousseau's favorite subjects: the theatre. Here, it is not the heinous crimes that bring us joy, but the successful defeat of evil powers. Heroes from hundreds, indeed thousands of years ago, along with the products of author's imaginations, are regularly the focus of our attention in entertainment. To this the Vicar rhetorically asks, "If there is nothing moral in the heart of man, what is the source of these transports of admiration for heroic actions, these raptures of love for great souls? What relation does this enthusiasm for virtue have to our private interest?" (287c). The importance of these transports and raptures is made clear when he observes, "Take this love of the beautiful from our hearts, and you take all the charm from life." There are few if any who have not experienced this, who have become wholly insensitive to any and every

kind of goodness in the world. Those who stifle such sentiment usually do so only when it is to their profit; in other cases, the Vicar notes, one wants the innocent protected, and feels anger at acts of violence and injustice inflicted even upon strangers.

Even for those who can ignore their conscience for the sake of their own superficial advantage, it is often a short-lived achievement. In keeping with the theme of the theatre, I would point to Shakespeare, who provides us with demonstrations of this in the torment conscience inflicts upon characters in "Macbeth" and "Richard III," and the fear of this rebuke expressed by Hamlet. While villains expect to profit from their crimes, which presumes evading punishment, the conscience (at least in many cases) both punishes uncaught criminals and serves as a deterrent for those who might expect to escape the law. As is pointed out by the Vicar, the "cry of remorse" has even been known to cause some to confess, as they fear its inescapable internal punishment worse than anything society could offer.

Not only does conscience act against bad actions, but it or something closely linked to it also spurs us on to do good, even to sacrifice for it. In my discussion of the Vicar's *rules of conduct* below, a principle best described as 'being good and finding happiness by following one's conscience' will be the key theme. There are still inadequately addressed questions with respect to the range of acceptability of the human conscience,[35] but the essential point is made when the Vicar rhetorically

[35] The fact that slavery has been accepted by societies in certain periods and apparently not affected the consciences of good people is problematic. When you look at the

asks "whether there is some country on earth where it is a crime to keep one's faith, to be clement, beneficent, and generous, where the good man is contemptible and the perfidious one honored?" (289c). As I will discuss further in Chapters Four and Five, while there may be some flexibility as to what the specific dictates of conscience are, there is an essential link between an action's accordance with conscience and its benefit to the polity - a link which is natural and unchanging.

DUALITIES, or Cause of Being/Principle of duties

> "Thus this "I," that is, this soul through which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body, and it is even easier to know than the body, and even if there were no body, the soul would not cease to be all that it is."
>
> René Decartes, ***Discourse on Method***, Part Four

In considering what might create the conscience, the Vicar touches on another important theme in the Profession that takes on some different forms. That is the basic duality of humans, which seems at first a straight-forward Cartesian distinction between body and soul, but subtly evolves into something more. After explaining his sinking (or rising) to a state of "perplexity and anxiety," the Vicar explains how he "ceaselessly wandered from doubt to doubt and brought back from my long meditations only

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Southern U.S., for example, it shows that over the last 150 years people's consciences (or at least the majority's) have apparently varied a great deal towards what is acceptable treatment of a prominent racial minority, in changing from slavery to segregation to a condition of political equality.

uncertainty, obscurity, and contradictions about the *cause of my being* and the *principle of my duties*" (268b emphasis mine). The removing of uncertainty about these two important considerations and the exposition of his three dogmas, or "articles of faith," take up the middle part of the first half of the Profession.

There are, in fact, two essential dualities that are at the root of the Vicar's ideas of 'cause of being' and 'principle of duties'. His discussion of our being centers around an investigation of various phenomena which arise out of our body/soul duality. The Vicar sees the existence of two 'substances' in us to be obvious (once carefully considered) and directly contrary to all claims by materialists. The 'principle of our duties' emerges from our selfish/social duality. The conflicting inclinations of selfishness and love of others that we inherently feel reflect this duality in our nature, which, because of its innateness, creates certain duties for us. The existence of the soul makes something immaterial like the conscience possible, and the Vicar sees it as the soul's built-in guide. Having drawn out will and freedom along with conscience from the body/soul duality in our being, the observation that we have a dual nature, that is to say, both individual and group concerns, produces duties for us - especially to our group - that are not always easy to fulfill given the lower, bodily desires inherent in our being, and the selfish, individual desires inherent in our nature. The conflicts natural to both our being and our nature need to be minimized as much as is possible. Determining just what is possible, as well as how it might best be done, are key goals in the Profession.[36] The

[36] As I have indicated and will expand upon, this is also fundamental to Rousseau's political and philosophic project.

conscience is central to all this, as it seems to be an essential ingredient to the smooth interaction between our body and soul, and our individualism and group responsibility.

His investigation of the cause of his own being includes succinct explanations of several complex issues concerning the nature of existence, sensation, matter and bodies, motion and rest, perception, and other general ideas which will not be analyzed in this thesis. Suffice it to say that much of it serves to verify fairly common-sense notions about these phenomena, albeit notions which might not meet the requirements of philosophic rigour. The essential points, for my purposes, are the three "articles of faith" that the Vicar professes; these, along with the affirmation of the duality in our being are the pillars of his overall argument.

The first of these articles of faith is that "a will moves the universe and animates nature," (273d) which is derived from the observation that matter alone only reacts to other active matter - it has no spontaneity. The only original acts, therefore, must be initiated by some kind of *will* (which, according to the argument, must be a non-material substance because of its spontaneity). Some kind of original will - necessary even if everything after it is determined - is fundamental, and in turn can be seen to necessitate a prime mover, or God. Establishing this is crucial, since both Rousseau (for political purposes) and the Vicar (for spiritual ones) worry that the atheist and agnostic denial of the necessity of God tempts people to slide easily into a kind of unreflective moral skepticism or relativism. Though will may be established, it is notable that the Vicar has not yet

endowed man uniquely with it, since he adds that animals too have the capacity for (apparently) spontaneous action. Without freedom of will, it is hard to imagine our significance being any more than the other creatures in whatever the Prime Mover intended. However, as he develops his account - culminating in the third article of faith - the Vicar resolutely endeavours to persuade that we are much more than sophisticated animals.

The next step in the account is his second article of faith, which is that "If moved matter shows me a will, matter moved according to certain laws shows me an intelligence" (275b). This is derived from the Vicar's conclusion that though we may not fully understand the universe - much less its cause or purpose - there *must* be an overall order to it since there is order everywhere we care to look, and nothing else makes sense.[37] This conclusion is made more plausible by the first article, which asserted that the creation of the universe - for whatever purpose - was intentional. If the idea of chaos is barely intelligible, intentional chaos seems even less so.[38]

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[37] This 'proof' of order in the universe is a good example of how the method the Vicar relies upon might be termed 'unphilosophic' - though it may be reasonable, it certainly lacks logical rigour. Yet the inability to be absolutely assured of an overarching order only confirms the need to have faith in the most important things. Despite what any philosophers might say, I think, believe, and sense that the existence of order of some sort is something everyone should have faith in.

[38] This could be wrong if one considered the potentiality of a loss or change of all order at any time as chaos, insofar as a creator could conceivably change the plans at any time, for any reason. An accidental order, on the other hand, might be more stable if it is in no being's power to change it. The Vicar's argument that "combination and chance will never result in anything but products of the same nature as the elements that are combined" (276a) would appear to be his response to this. He would also likely rest assured in the belief that God is just, and that subjecting us to chaos would not be. The point is not crucial (fortunately), since the essential idea here is that we must base our decisions on something, and the existing order as far as we can determine it is the most reasonable and sensible choice.

The idea of order, like conscience, is prominent in the Profession. Though the Vicar returns to it frequently, most of the discussion of order is found between the second and third articles of faith. He begins this more dense discussion with a defense of the existence of order, despite the uncertainty of its purpose. The Vicar uses the example of a man who sees the inside of a watch, not knowing what a watch was for. This man would acknowledge that there must be an order in which all these harmonious pieces are working towards, even if there was no way to understand what its purpose is (275c). This serves to absolve the Vicar of the responsibility of discovering what the whole is ordered for before positing that it exists.[39] At the same time, however, there is a tacit indication that this is not necessarily an impossible task; if one could put the whole together (or put the face on the watch) and study it, the general purpose *might* be discovered. It is important to see the order first, however, if one is to regard the further step worth attempting.

He then sets out to determine what he can about the order. First ridiculing those who maintain that there is not necessarily order, he then derides any who would attempt to catalogue every detail of the practically infinite orderings of nature, while missing the most important part: "the harmony and accord of the whole." It is as if they were trying to show the greatness of a watch without seeing that all the interesting parts actually worked to a general purpose. The Vicar's composition on the wonders of nature is much briefer, noting only that the inability in nature for

[39] Despite the relevance of the answer to his study, the Vicar (true to form) does not feel compelled to contemplate abstract questions that evolve out of this, such as "why is there something rather than nothing?"

interbreeding[40] shows that not only is there order, but it has been set up so as not to be disturbed.

The genius, complexity, and durability of the apparent order combine to make it clear to the Vicar "that the world is governed by a powerful and wise will" (276d). The fact that all things contribute to the order of the whole indicates to him that there is a "single intelligence." But beyond this, he claims to know nothing else about the essence of the universe, and, in accordance with his method, does not care to toil endlessly trying to make unlikely discoveries "which may agitate my *amour-propre* but are useless for my conduct and are beyond my reason" (277a). From the development of rational faith in a single, powerful, and wise orderer - which he now calls God - enough could be determined for his purposes, so he proceeds to engage in this much more useful study.

The first thing he derives from this analysis is that goodness is a necessary consequence of intelligence, power, and will. He also declares with certainty that there is an autonomous being to which his existence is subordinated. Beyond this, he professes ignorance about God's make-up, and (reiterating his method with a slightly different emphasis) promises to avoid such deliberations except when "forced to by the sentiment of his relations with me" (277c). That which he felt capable of pronouncing on is important, though, for it presumably combines the three ingredients for the goodness of man as well as of God. God's *complete* possession of all

[40] The sole example the Vicar presents is one pregnant with implications for justice in a society, insofar as so much of its mores and laws are directed at cohesive, orderly regeneration. I would argue (as I believe Rousseau and the Vicar do) that this is the most critical element of 'order' in the universe as far as humans are concerned.

three, however, is the difference between Him and the diminished image of Him that is man. While men are prone to be lacking in intelligence, power, or will in any given decision, we see that man's unique ability to use them all, and thus do good, sets him above other animals.[41] It is both his superiority as an animal, and his potential to be something more that puts him "incontestably in the first rank." If this capacity were not clear in characterizing God by attributes we are able to share, he does so by saying "What! I can observe and know the beings and their relations, I can sense what order, beauty, and virtue are, I can contemplate the universe and raise myself up to it, and I would compare myself to the brutes?" (278a). Only a gloomy, sophistical philosopher, it would seem, could hold such a ridiculous notion.

Having discussed the natural order generally, and man's special place in it, he now turns to the problem of order - and disorder - within the human species. He is pleased at being made a man, and his gratitude for it becomes his first source of worship. But along with man's ability to understand and do the good comes a quality also unique to him: his ability to do the bad. This is what the Vicar sees in looking at how man has ordered, or rather disordered himself. The "apparent contradiction" formed by comparing the order of nature with the confusion we have created for ourselves is the source of the Vicar's "sublime ideas of the

[41] Free will and intelligence are those which really set us apart, since our power is so much a consequence of these. With intelligence, man is "the only one that has a view of the whole" and the arguments in the Profession which follow this statement indicate that the rough grasp of order we can derive from our intelligence makes possible, if not necessary, our relatedly rough grasp of justice.

soul" (278e).[42] From this, the Vicar recognizes another duality within himself, namely two forces at work: the higher enabling him to "see the good" and "love it;" but the other making him "do the bad." He adds "I am active when I listen to reason, passive when my passions carry me away, and my worst torment, when I succumb, is to sense that I could have resisted" (279a). We see the re-entry of conscience here as the source of inner torment, without which there seems nothing that would keep us from doing the bad for our profit. It would also seem plausible to give credit to conscience for enabling us to see what the good might be, or for guiding our order-perceiving intelligence enough to at least turn us away from the clearly wrong. Otherwise, in our fertile, easily deceived minds, it is likely that any number of things could be candidates for permissibility- and often are in those whom we consider deranged because of their misguided conscience.

Another support of conscience - and of the two-substance conception of man - is given here, where the Vicar says:

> If conscience is the work of prejudices, I am doubtless wrong, and there is no demonstrable morality. But if to prefer oneself to everything is an inclination natural to man, and if nevertheless the first sentiment of justice is innate in the human heart, let him who regards man as a simple being overcome

[42] One might also have used Plato's Republic as inspiration, for the two "distinct principles" discovered in the soul represent fairly closely the highest and lowest parts of the ternary soul developed by Socrates and his interlocutors. The remaining part is less clearly developed, but the emphasis on will and will-power would seem to be the closest equivalent to the spirited part of the soul described in the Republic. Another element of it is quietly, but importantly, added later by the Vicar, when he describes the *courage* required to be good (see footnote 57 below).

these contradictions, and I shall no longer acknowledge more than one substance. (279b)[43]

The idea that our conscience has some intrinsic natural standards is important in order to make us more accountable for our actions. If we believe that people's consciences are simply what happen to come out of their nurture, it becomes very difficult to judge their actions in any meaningful moral sense. They can be judged legal or illegal, but not as truly good or bad; the relativists have won, and according to the Vicar society has lost. This point has been looked at previously, but here there is a new branch grown out of it, one, which becomes the third article of faith.

A key consideration in evaluating accountability is whether, or to what extent, we come to our own conclusions in moral matters. While not entirely necessary, it would seem helpful for a person to have accurate information if they are to be considered free in the choices that they make. If our society dictates everything we believe, the notion of freedom takes on much less significance. While it is perfectly normal to be influenced by the ideas of our upbringing, it would seem that the capacity for something like an objective re-evaluation of reigning opinions and principles - such as the Vicar demonstrated at the outset with respect to his theological training - would be necessary. The Vicar indicates that without the objectivity of the conscience, freedom is impossible. For the Vicar, conscience is a guide that helps a person know the good, and if all it

[43] I believe that Rousseau is not himself convinced of this, and that the challenge here, on his part, is an honest one. As I will examine in Chapter 4, there is enough contradiction in what is said about our divine voice and salvation to suggest that while Rousseau would have our conscience be a guide to happiness, it is not necessarily put there by God, as the Vicar concludes from its innateness.

showed him was a manipulated and thus perverted version of the good, he would certainly be less obligated to follow it. Instead, he would follow only what would give him the appearance of being good - while in fact doing whatever he can get away with that serves his selfish interest. If this unjust man failed to follow society's standards as reflected in most of our 'consciences', it would simply reflect society's inability to indoctrinate him, or instill sufficient fear in him, and not reflect anything morally good or bad in him.[44]

The importance of this point comes into focus when we turn to the subjects of will and freedom. It was noted in the first article of faith that we have something in us more than matter, by virtue of our being capable of spontaneous action. On the animal level, this 'spontaneous' action seems to be ruled by simple instinct. Man, however, is uniquely able to resist and overrule instinct; this can be seen as the essence of his freedom. The Vicar does not deny the not-fully-conscious decisions or actions that we make, nor the influence of subrational inclinations and outside actions on our senses. "But my will is independent of my senses; I consent or I

[44] If this is the case, so too, then, is moral behaviour, and the existence of anything noble). As I will discuss in Chapter Four, it may be that some kind of relativism may ultimately exist. There is credence in the prejudice argument insofar as conscience will to *some* degree always be determined by one's education and the mores of one's city. There is also the argument that the 'truth' is too hard to see; or, put in a Platonic way, the conscience can, at best, only show us a 'shadow' of the good since we are incapable of seeing more. I will respond to both of these charges, with the help of Rousseau and his Vicar, in Chapters Four and Five. For now, let me point to the greater concern for Rousseau, which is that regardless of the degree to which they might be correct, the proponents of the relativist position are broadly persuasive in their view. If this sense of what is good that we call conscience is debunked and thus not trusted, we (or at least some) are likely to either look in a much less trustworthy place, or give up the notion of good altogether.

resist; I succumb or I conquer; and I sense perfectly within myself when I do what I wanted to do or when all I am doing is giving way to my passions. I always have the power to will, I do not always have the force to execute" (280c). God was characterized earlier as being in full possession of intelligence, power, and will - which necessarily produces goodness. By implication, man's goodness thus depends on how much he is able to embody these three characteristics. The Vicar has made a case that our conscience is given to us as a guide for our intelligence. This leaves power and will. God is omnipotent; we are not, and this limited power obviously constrains what we can do. Our intelligence might say that providing proper nutrition to every human or making every country democratic are 'good' things, and we might have the will to do all we can to achieve these goals. We do not have the power, though, so being good does not require us to strive endlessly to do impossible things. There are plenty of more modest goals that are within our power, and which our conscience/intelligence tell us are good. In these cases, it is sufficient strength of will, or what we have come to call will-power, that is lacking to us most. Our freedom lies in the option always to endeavor to do good. For practical reasons, the good we are responsible for is generally thought of as what our intelligence tells us is good among those options we have the power to accomplish. Thus when we fail to do good in a culpable sense, it is clearly the lack of resolution or will-power that is the culprit.

The Vicar's narrowing his analysis of the freedom to do good to whether or not we execute our will brings him to the third article of faith: that "Man is therefore free in his actions and as such is animated by an immaterial substance" (281a). It appears that this substance is will, will

being the product of our intelligence and inclination, which are in turn guided (ideally) by our conscience. Freedom, then, involves the ability to do what one wills, without any barriers other than physical limitations or lack of will-power (the latter being the one we are held accountable for). Having established this, the Vicar considers its implications for the idea of 'providence', which is, properly considered, God's giving to us what we need. Providence is commonly thought of as something more, as something like God's making sure everything goes well with us, and it is this kind of thinking that the Vicar combats, replacing it with God's giving us the ability to make everything go well ourselves.[45]

In the same way that we must be able more or less to make up our own minds about what is good in order to be free, so must we be ultimately alone in acting, both in good and bad. As the Vicar says, "Providence does not will the evil a man does in abusing the freedom it gives him; but neither does it prevent him from doing it," since doing so would seem to be "doing a greater evil by degrading his nature" (281b). The possibility of doing evil is a necessary implication of our freedom. The Vicar speculates that our strength has been limited so that we are not able to "disturb the general order," and instead our actions affect us without changing the course of the species.[46] The ability to do evil is

[45] To this I think the Vicar would add that God's providence ensures that any undeserved shortcomings we encounter in this life (ill-fated hardships like handicaps, a death of a child, or being unjustly convicted of something are examples), will be repaid bounteously in the next. Discussion of this idea, including how Rousseau indicates that he is less convinced of its necessity, is reserved for Chapter 4.

[46] One wonders how our present ability to destroy the human race through nuclear war, not to mention the most prominent possibilities in genetic alteration, would change the Vicar's view on this point.

something we should appreciate, since it is what makes us, uniquely in the universe, capable of noble action, and possessing what the Vicar calls "the right to virtue." Were we without this ability, we would be the same as a beast in being guided only by instinct; instead we are uniquely offered the joy of being virtuous through overcoming the temptations of our passions and listening to our conscience. This opportunity is what God has blessed us with.

We are also uniquely capable of making ourselves miserable - this too is a necessary result of our freedom. The Vicar endeavors to show here and throughout that whether we are happy or unhappy ultimately depends on us; the balance of this chapter will be an investigation of this notion. I hope to have laid out thus far the key components of the Vicar's faith: that moral goodness is something that exists; that our conscience is our guide to determining what the goal is; and, that our will-power is the necessary ingredient for achieving it. These principles being established, the Vicar then sets out to determine what rules of conduct follow from them, and this will be the focus of the next section.

RULES OF CONDUCT

> "Shall we hire a herald then," I said, "or shall I myself announce that Ariston's son has decided that the best and most just man is happiest, and he is that man who is kingliest and king of himself...whether or not in being such they escape the notice of all human beings and gods."
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> Plato **The Republic** (580b-c)

Far from being an extensive set of ordinances, the Vicar's "rules of conduct" turn out to be just one: follow your conscience. To justify this, he declares "Everything I sense to be good is good; everything I sense to be bad is bad" (286c). At this point, he reviews some of the points he made already about conscience: warning again that reasoning can obscure it; pointing out that while we naturally care for ourselves, we sense that in profiting at the expense of another we do wrong; and declaring that conscience is the infallible guide of our souls. It is when he says of conscience, "It is to the soul what instinct is to the body; he who follows conscience obeys nature and does not fear being led astray" (286-7), that the young narrator apparently felt the need to interrupt - a dramatic device surely placed strategically by Rousseau that should not escape our attention.

It is not immediately clear, however, what the reason for interrupting here, of all places, would be. It is possible that the youth has a problem with the singular emphasis on conscience, especially the idea that it is so simple to hear it clearly. The problems with conscience being obscured by prejudice and self-interest have already been discussed, and will necessarily come up again - especially given the Vicar's suggestion that this divine voice is now silent (291a). I think it more likely, however, that the youth objects to the idea of instinct, since it is what the Vicar is talking about at the time, and because Rousseau adds a footnote defending it just before the averted interruption in which he acknowledges that some see it as a contentious matter. It is possible that the argument against instinct in the body is important to overcome if we are to accept

conscience as instinctual to the soul; for if bodily instinct is not innate, it would seem unlikely that conscience is either given that it is its quality of being placed in us by the Creator that can be seen to give it divine authority.

Examining the Vicar's 'tarry' gives us a clearer indication as to what the objection is about. Among other important points, the Vicar returns chiefly to arguing for the existence of an inalienable, natural sense of goodness within us. His defensiveness on this issue lends credence to the criticism that conscience as the 'soul's instinct' may be still doubted. Some of the evidence he uses (such as that of the affinity we have for heroes in the theatre, the pain of remorse, and the virtue of the ancients despite the example set by their gods) has already been cited in my earlier outline of the Vicar's case for conscience. The first argument here begins with the statement that "All the morality of our actions is in the judgement we ourselves make of them" (287b). This statement is, surprisingly, in agreement with a key point that relativists make about how different people and societies have different ideas of right and wrong, from which they mistakenly conclude that because no one is clearly right, then anyone or anything equally is. The Vicar agrees with their observation that whether one person comes to the same conclusion on a question of behaviour as another is not what matters morally.[47] What does matter morally is that we reach conclusions to the best of our ability and act according to those conclusions. This is not a radical relativism, in that it

[47] Though Rousseau, at least, would argue that a 'worse' conclusion might have deleterious political ramifications by which one could judge it. Additionally, the element of 'universality' in conscience would limit the potential for acceptable radical divergence in moral judgment.

does not say that no action is bad; rather, it says that any action will be morally good if it is not done out of a weakness in regard to bodily passions and if due thought is given to the long-term personal and societal ramifications. 'Conscientiousness', then, can be seen as a restatement of the maxim 'follow your conscience'. Put another way, we are to use our intelligence to determine the best course of action within our power - creating for us a proper 'will' - and then apply the necessary will-power to see it through. If we have truly done this to the best of our ability, then we have acted morally. Thus the need for concrete rules of behaviour are not necessary from the Vicar in much the same way that a fully explicit constitution is not necessary (or even possible) in the Social Contract; the universal rules and guidelines provided are largely formal, from which the specific applications can be adapted to each situation. Most importantly, the impetus to give proper consideration to the effects of an action on yourself and others has been established. The errors of cultures or states are for philosophers, lawyers, and politicians to argue about, but probably not fix. *As long as we live morally* - which is according to both the best conclusions we can arrive at and what is within our power[48] to accomplish - *we will have nothing to regret.* The danger of our limited intelligence leading us astray remains, but as the Vicar shows by the end of his 'tarry', this is not a great concern.

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[48] In excusing what is not within our "power" from our responsibilities, it should be noted that "willpower" is a totally different matter. As the Vicar shows, it is the single thing we are morally responsible for, and the key to both goodness and happiness. I believe that a main perpetuator of contemporary moral degradation is the tendency to confuse will-power and power, and thus excuse those who lack it as we would excuse a person who could not swim for not saving a drowning person. Whether this is justified in some cases or not, the Vicar makes the case that without the relative sovereignty of willpower there is no will, and without will we are just animals.

Apart from the examples of conscience that I cited earlier, there are a number of new points in this somewhat more practical section. In establishing "having nothing to regret" as a goal, the Vicar brings in what I see as the selfish motive to be good which is essential in making his profession persuasive. It is affirmed at the outset of the 'tarry' when he declares that "the primary reward for justice is to sense that one practices it" (287b). Along with showing conscience to be innate, the demonstration of our happiness depending on how much we listen to it is the other essential aspect of this last part of the first half. Their location in the middle of the Profession is appropriate, because all the earlier quasi-theoretical elements can be seen to be leading up to or clearing the way for these key points, and the second half of the Profession focuses primarily on the practical (and political) conclusions to draw once they are established.

In this first paragraph of the 'tarry', the Vicar concludes with the observation that if we were not naturally good, then being good would be a kind of corruption of our nature, or a vice that would bring us remorse. If wickedness is our natural condition, why do we feel bad in committing it? He then asks us to "return to ourselves" and see if it is not the case that good acts and other people's pleasure please us; wicked acts, and the misery of others, are never enjoyable to us[49] unless they make up for some injustice done by the sufferer. After speaking about the consistency of this phenomenon in the theatre, he gives a summary of the good man and the

[49] If they are, clearly the Vicar would see it as a reflection on us, not an argument against his point. The reader, of course, may disagree.

wicked man, saying that the "love of the beautiful" is the "charm" in life, and the base character who has had to stifle his appreciation of this charm in order to be able to live with his wicked actions "has no more joy in anything. This unfortunate man no longer feels, no longer lives. He is already dead" (287c).

In arguing for the innateness and durability of this phenomenon, the Vicar points out that even those who try to stifle their sense of justice cannot entirely do so - that they still feel these natural emotions (at least, but not exclusively, when their interests are not involved). To the pleasure that the happiness of others brings a person and the corresponding hatred of wicked acts - even of actors who died long ago and do not threaten us - the Vicar adds the emotion of pity, which one feels for others "in spite of oneself." Even "the most perverse are unable to lose this inclination entirely. Often it puts them in contradiction with themselves. The robber who plunders passers-by still covers the nakedness of the poor, and the most ferocious killer supports a fainting man" (288a). These examples attest to an urge within the unjust man, who tends to his low passions in spite of the sense of good he continues to possess. It is an illustration of the kind of internal contradiction that the Vicar fundamentally relies upon as demonstrating the existence of a natural and inescapable standard of wrong. He is willing to call it 'wrong' inasmuch as this kind of contradiction would be a clear source of eventual unhappiness. Nowhere is the power of this 'urge' put on better display than in the example the Vicar turns to next: a man confessing to a crime that he was not likely to

be found guilty of doing.[50] The Vicar then shares a poignant comparison of the just and unjust man based on the observation of the contradiction so manifest in the latter. He says:

> The wicked man fears and flees himself. He cheers himself up by rushing outside of himself....Without bitter satire, without insulting banter, he would always be sad. The mocking laugh is his only pleasure. By contrast, the serenity of the just man is eternal. His is not a malignant laugh but a joyous one; he bears its source in himself. He is as gay alone as in the midst of a circle. He does not draw his contentment from those who come near him; he communicates it to them. (288b)

The difference between these two men is that the one is usually miserable and only temporarily escapes this condition when he casts this misery upon others. The good man, on the other hand, is always in possession of a perfectly shareable internal joy; that is, one which he shares with others at no loss to himself, if not a gain.

The Vicar restates the universal innateness of conscience here, citing especially as evidence the ancients ignoring the example set by their licentious gods, but also adding that all societies, no matter how bizarre, have the "same ideas of justice and decency" (288c). He then declares that "there is in the depths of souls, then, an innate principle of justice and virtue according to which, in spite of our maxims, we judge our actions and those of others as good or bad. It is to this principle that I give the name *conscience*" (289b). He proceeds to outline the three kinds of

[50] The Vicar's autobiography provides us with a similar case, in that he would not lie about his erotic activities despite the fact he both disagreed with the law, and would likely be believed were he to deny it.

arguments that could be made against this statement. The first two have already been discussed: that we are all blank slates at birth and judge only according to acquired ideas (the 'conscience as prejudice' argument); and that the similarity between societies is only apparent - there are examples of much different societies if you go far enough (the 'cultural relativism' argument). Third, however, is the argument that we are all essentially selfish and that all of these so-called "just" actions can be explained by selfish motivations. This self-interested power-seeker *á-la*-Hobbes argument has not really been considered up to now.

The Vicar dismisses it with a fairly simple, yet powerful counter-argument. While in a fair proportion of apparently benevolent actions one could certainly find selfish motives - sometimes strong ones that rightfully cast suspicion on a would-be magnanimous man - there are unquestionably occasions where people volunteer time, effort, money, and the like to those less fortunate and to the society in general. While the pessimist might maintain that this is all for reputation or to relieve guilt for their relative fortune, when the Vicar cites those who go so far as die for a cause, he seems to deliver a decisive blow to the argument that all we do is seek power after power in a purely selfish way. The Vicar appropriately mends the narrow-minded view of self-interest when he says, "No doubt, no one acts for anything other than his own good; but if there is not a moral good which must be taken into account, one will never explain by private interest anything but the actions of the wicked" (289d). This brings together the two main points of the Profession: that there is a true good we

are capable of more or less adequately understanding, and that acting upon our best approximation of it is the only way to ensure happiness.[51]

At this point, the Vicar reminds the youth of his method with a restatement of his opening disclaimer that his intention is not to dazzle the youth with remote "metaphysical discussions," as they only "lead to nothing." Instead, his intention is to help the boy sense in his heart that he is right, irrespective of the arguments of any philosophers. "For that purpose," he says, "I need *only* make you distinguish our acquired ideas from our natural sentiments" (289f, emphasis mine). Clearly, much of the Profession is a justification of this tenet, and many of the prescriptions in it rely on our being able to accomplish this distinction to a considerable extent. While the Vicar is no doubt earnest in his declaration, such understatement of the task should not go unnoticed. Rousseau, well versed in Plato (especially The Republic), could not be unaware of the fact that the Vicar is in a sense saying something roughly equivalent to "For you to understand how not to be wicked, I *only* have to pull you out of the cave so you can see the truth of human nature." Yet when the next two pages are considered with this in mind, it seems that this *is* what the Vicar means. But, instead of understating the immensity of the philosophic journey Socrates describes in Book Seven, the Vicar indicates that there is something less Herculean, but more important required for the human journey necessary for someone to be happy and good.

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[51] This fundamental idea, not unlike so many others, does not appear to be strictly provable (i.e. by 'pure logic' without recourse to sentiment). Yet it is clearly a fundamental premise of both Rousseau's philosophic understanding and political prescriptions.

He begins this reformation of the cave analogy with the observation that:

> we sense before knowing, and since we do not learn to want what is good for us and to flee what is bad for us but rather get this will from nature, by that very fact love of the good and hatred of the bad are as natural as the love of ourselves. The acts of the conscience are not judgments but sentiments. Although all our ideas come to us from outside, the sentiments evaluating them are within us, and it is by them alone that we know the compatibility or incompatibility between us and the things we ought to seek or flee. (289f-a)

Disregarding for the moment how we learn what is good or bad, his point here is that ideas come from outside of us, but we evaluate their goodness (and are inclined or disinclined) according to the natural sentiments within us - sentiments which are traceable to our self-love. The importance of this sensibility is made clear when the Vicar begins the next paragraph essentially by saying "I sense, therefore I am." He contends that sentiments are "incontestably anterior" to intelligence and ideas, and in that all three would appear to be parts of "thinking," he does not so much contradict Descartes as make his famous declaration more precise.

These sentiments, provided for by the "cause of our being," are the love of self, the fear of pain, the horror of death, and the desire for well-being. It might appear in cataloguing only these motivations that the Vicar basically agrees with Hobbes (which would, in turn, suggest that this profession is certainly not one of Rousseau's faith). But the Vicar's apparent Hobbesianism is revised in a very Rousseauian way when he then says:

> But if, as cannot be doubted, man is by his nature sociable, or at least made to become so, he can be so only by means of other innate sentiments relative to his species; for if we consider only physical need, it ought certainly to disperse men instead of bringing them together. It is from the moral system formed by this double relation to oneself and one's fellows that the impulse of conscience is born.[52] (290b)

As discussed in the last section, our dual nature (i.e. selfish yet social) is the source of conscience, without which we would either live in a Hobbesian state of war, or (without the innate sentiments of sociality of which conscience is fortunately a part) a solitary state similar to that described in the beginning of the Second Discourse.

Our Hobbesian sentiments of self-love reflect the primacy of creating and preserving what is good for us, and our conscience leads us to see that this includes a moral good which precludes injustices towards others and our society.[53] The Vicar adds that "To know the good is not to love it; man does not have innate knowledge of it, but as soon as his reason

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[52] While the claim that "man is by nature sociable" seems to go against Rousseau's ideas in the Second Discourse, the amendment of "or at least made to become so" certainly does not. In saying that "if we consider only physical need" men should in fact be solitary, I believe that Rousseau is indicating that in describing a solitary man in the Second Discourse he was doing just that. This solitary savage could then be seen as a response to Hobbes in showing what the state of nature should be according to the selfish principles he relies on, but principles that Rousseau thinks are insufficient. In revising Hobbes' theory here by introducing the additional factors that society necessitates, the Vicar does with conscience what Rousseau used pity to do in the Second Discourse; namely, take Hobbes astute observations of the low side of human motivation and add the moral/societal/innately good aspect he omits (but which is just as real) in order to get a truer picture of man. This idea is further supported by the Vicar's argument that a comparison between man, who is uniquely capable of sensing order, beauty, and virtue, and the beasts could only be a product of the gloomy philosophy of an abject soul (278a).

makes him know it, his conscience leads him to love it. It is this sentiment which is innate" (290b). He indicates that he has now finished answering the youth's objection (which appears now to have been regarding the idea of an innate 'love of the good') when he says "Thus I do not believe, my friend, that it is impossible to explain, by the consequences of our nature, the immediate principle of the conscience independently of reason itself" (290c). The objection that faulty reason and prejudices factor into the workings of conscience is not entirely off the mark, as they can influence our idea of what is good. But the conscience gravitates our reasoning toward the true good by keeping it within the bounds of what we instinctually know to be just. This is not a specific knowledge, but as the Vicar has shown in his examples, these bounds of innate justice are relatively uniform and become clearer the farther one strays from the good. And thus conscience can make good men of us all, in giving a guide and incentive to our deceiveable intelligence which we have to work hard to ignore.

Once the theories of Hobbes and Descartes have been reformed, the 'unphilosophic' Vicar in effect returns to re-considering Plato's cave allegory. After saying that those who deny the existence of conscience do not prove, but merely affirm their belief, he counters that his affirmation of the opposite is just as valid, and even more so in that he has "in addition the inner witness and the voice of conscience, which testifies on its own behalf" (290c). He then evokes Plato's grand image to illustrate the importance of this idea, pointedly asserting:

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[53] The Vicar makes clear that injustice is the disruption of order, and thus injustices to individuals and to society are practically the same.

> If the first glimmers of judgement dazzle us and at first make a blur of objects in our sight, let us wait for our weak eyes to open up again and steady themselves, and soon we shall see these same objects again in the light of reason as nature first showed them to us. *Or, rather, let us be more simple and less vain.* Let us limit ourselves to the first sentiments that we find in ourselves, since study always leads us back to them when it has not led us astray. (290c, emphasis mine)

This radical rephrasing of Plato's important allegory shows that for the Vicar, the struggle is not so much to climb out of the realm of prejudiced opinion into the pure light of truth as it is to turn inside ourselves and, shutting out the noises of others, listen to our hearts. In following the above quote with an ode to conscience, the Vicar demonstrates that he sees the traditional approach of relying more and more upon abstract and metaphysical considerations as an overly complex and vain attempt at discovering things we may not be able to know, and certainly do not need to. Of what we do need to know, the Delphic oracle of "know thyself" would be closer to the mark if not still somewhat overstated; the Vicar wants to discover only what is necessary to be good, and persuade the youth that this is what is most important. What Plato depicted as some high, far-removed ideals that only seem discoverable far away from society and our natural selves are thus replaced by the divine voice inside each of us that the Vicar has tried so hard to make the youth hear.[54]

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[54] This, I believe, can be seen as the crux of the difference between the Vicar's 'natural theology' and philosophy. Whether only one is correct or if it is just a matter of emphasis I am not sure.

The vision of this philosopher that the Vicar evokes is one of a man who spends his life in abstract contemplation, but not in action. He will spend countless hours on the finer points of the virtues, but as any human intellect eventually must, he will arrive at some kind of uncertainty. Having reached this point, he will be all the more likely to be paralyzed with the fear of acting only for the 'apparent' good; or, even worse, he may habituate this uncertainty and become a perpetual skeptic concerning the good. In a way,[55] Plato can be seen to be the one who says "You only have to get out of the cave and see the pure truth to understand how not to be wicked." "Thank heaven," the Vicar says, "we are delivered from all that terrifying apparatus of philosophy. We can be men without being scholars" (290). This heaven-sent quality thus allows a natural religion - within the reach of everyman - to replace not only philosophy, but also organized religion. Because of our consciences, we can live a just life without being another Socrates and without giving inevitably corrupting authority to an illegitimate clergy.

This is not to say that it is an easy matter to listen to your conscience. As the Vicar now explains (in a suspiciously Rousseauian fashion), conscience - which previously had been described as innate, natural, universal, and even powerful - has been silenced by modern

[55] I fully acknowledge that this is an overly simplistic way of interpreting Plato, especially in ignoring the case Plato makes for living justly not only through Socrates' words but more importantly his deeds. That being said, the exaggeration points to something misleading in Plato - typified by the cave allegory - that I think Rousseau believes to have pernicious results; namely, the 'end' of Socratic inquiry appears to Plato's modern audience (however fairly) as so far removed from the polity and humanity. These results would be evident to Rousseau in the kind of inhuman (and not superhuman) philosopher described through the Vicar, and that which Rousseau himself castigates in several of his works.

society. The degeneration of society and men over time as described in the Second Discourse is mirrored here in their consciences, and as men replace the voice of nature with their own words, a kind of fall from grace inevitably follows. All our moral sophistication has made us deaf to that simple guidance within us. The Vicar goes so far as to say of conscience that "It finally gives up as a result of being dismissed. It no longer speaks to us. It no longer responds to us" (291a). Conscience is dead.

To help vivify his teaching, the Vicar now reverts to his own personal experience of the relativistic purgatory mentioned at the outset.[56] He explains that he felt only coldness and skepticism, deciding that "Moral good is only a chimera. There is nothing good but the pleasure of the senses" (291b). Had he not been able to put aside the reasoning that got him to this point by referring back to his heart and recalling the pleasure that good deeds had brought him, he would have had no hope of escape. Fortunately he could, and the Vicar indicates that this should be the starting place for everyone. Like justice, being good is its own reward; it is in our hearts and not in subtle reasoning that this is undeniable. Unfortunately, it is not so simple to be good, despite our sense that it always pays dividends. The Vicar explains this by saying:

> One has countless reasons to reject the inclinations of the human heart. False prudence confines it within the limits of the human *I*; countless efforts of human courage are needed to dare to cross those limits. To enjoy good is the reward for having done good, and this reward is only obtained after having deserved it.

[56] And which resembles the period of doubt Rousseau mentions in the Reveries before aligning his conclusions with those of the Vicar.

> Nothing is more lovable than virtue, but one must possess it to find it so. (291b)[57]

This "false prudence" is a product of our misguided reasoning and sophistication, and with it we convince ourselves that we have no responsibility to go out of our way at all to do anything for anyone. "I have no time for this," or "I can't afford that," or "It's not my problem" become more and more persuasive, and with this cowardly enlightenment we go on throughout our lives in our own detached little worlds.[58] The result, however, is the development of an internal contradiction that was earlier shown to characterize the wicked, unhappy man. This development is clearly expressed by the Vicar when he says:

> Constantly caught up in the combat between my natural sentiments, which spoke to the common interest, and my reason, which related everything to me, I would have drifted all my life in this continual alternation - doing the bad, loving the good, always in contradiction with myself - if new lights had not illuminated my heart, and if the truth, which settled my opinions, had not also made my conduct certain and put me in agreement with myself. (291c)

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[57] The Vicar has briefly mentions courage here, which, as I indicated above, might be seen as manifestation of the loosely developed 'spirited' part of Plato's ternary soul, which up until this point had been characterized only by will-power. Will-power seems to entail more of an ability to either abstain, or to do something good rather than be culpably complacent. Courage would seem necessary in a different case - doing good when it is at the risk of bodily harm or some sacrifice of lower concerns but necessary for something like the health of the soul.

[58] This sentiment is well expressed in the Second Discourse (132) in the example of the philosopher whose "fellow man can be murdered with impunity right under his window; he only has to put his hands over his ears and argue with himself a little bit to prevent nature, which revolts within him, from identifying him with the man who is being assassinated."

This illumination of truth is apparently a proper view of order - the phenomenon that was an important building block in his articles of faith. 'Love of order' is not enough, since, as the Vicar points out, even amongst the wicked there is a moral order, just a bad one. The *proper* order is what needs to be discovered and abided by, and the last major point of the first half of the Profession is the Vicar's declaration of what the proper order must be. He says that what differentiates the two kinds of order is that:

> the good man orders himself in relation to the whole, and the wicked one orders the whole in relation to himself. The latter makes himself the center of all things; the former measures his radius and keeps to the circumference. Then he is ordered in relation to the common center, which is God, and in relation to all the concentric circles, which are the creatures. (p.292a)

This discovery is the key to coping with uncertainty. Things are not 'what you make of them' - according to which our thoughts would turn to what is most advantageous for us according to what we see as the possibilities. Instead, things are what they are, and rather than trying to shape them to our advantage, the goal is to determine what our proper place in them is and live accordingly. This could be seen as a disheartening discovery in that our 'destiny' is thus not entirely up to ourselves. But this would be to take a misguided perspective that wants to fabricate a good outcome for ourselves when instead there is one readily available - to align ourselves with the order which has been established by the providential God, and is thus necessarily good. The Vicar concludes by asking the skeptic "what felicity is sweeter than sensing that one is ordered in a system in which everything is good?" (292b).

One objection to the Vicar would be that this universal order is impossible to understand fully. But this reflects the kind of vain philosophy that he has tried to overcome by showing that the same goodness in God which creates the order gives us the ability to sense what we need to know. It is thus that He challenges not our intellect, but our will-power. Another objection to this may be that in a person's life, the political order by which people are forced to live will never match the divine one, and instead likely cause considerable conflict for those who try to live by the latter. While this is valid, inasmuch as it is a concern of our earthly side, and not the spiritual one which is the primary concern of the Vicar, it would be a challenge better directed at Rousseau, or his Legislator. In fact, because the Vicar is endeavoring to minimize the influence of the body upon the soul as much as possible, and show how focusing on the latter is the key to true happiness, he can be credited for giving people the best outlook in a world replete with unjust regimes. The benefits of this separation are made manifest here, when after dismissing bodily pain and the worry that good deeds will not be recognized, he says "In suffering an injustice, I say to myself, 'The just Being who rules everything will certainly know how to compensate me for it'" (292b). The fear of death, which some philosophers have made fundamental to all human activity, is thus negligible for the Vicar because "The needs of my body and the miseries of my life make the idea of death more bearable to me. They will be so many fewer bonds to break when it is necessary to leave everything" (292b).

There is still the questionable providence in a God that would make such miseries so common for man. Though the Vicar does not presume to

be able to understand His reasons, he makes some "modest conjectures" as to why we were made so imperfectly. First, he reminds us of an important point made previously that the capacity and temptation to do evil are necessary if we are to have the ability to be virtuous. Without this we would be like the angels: content in doing good, but hardly to be admired for it (as the virtuous man is) because we would have no choice.

Second, the progressive difficulty in resisting wickedness the more depraved one is, and seeing this in others, is an instructive deterrent to becoming even a little debauched. Those who slowly poison their innate goodness, and thereby sicken their souls by continually willing to do the bad, can blame nobody else when they find themselves depraved. For the Vicar, vice is like an addictive drug. When you look at the power it has over addicts, it becomes difficult to dismiss their complaints that they have no choice but to do the drug, and even engage in the other immoral things that they have to do to support it. The Vicar argues that, regardless of their inability to now help themselves, for those addicted to vice it was certainly within their power not to get into the position of having no choice.

It is here that the Vicar's teachings connect most directly with those of Rousseau in Emile. He observes how much easier it would be to live as he sees is so obviously the best way, if only we could be taught to listen to the voice of nature before being corrupted by society. In the Vicar's declaration of the death of conscience, the fatal blow is apparently the lack of a timely lesson persuading us of the authority of its voice. It is when we are "already corrupted by vice" that the study of our natural duties and goodness becomes "boring and painful." This observation has clear

implications beyond a simple profession, and will be considered in the final chapter along with the other lessons for the Legislator.

The Vicar ends the first half of the Profession with a summary statement of his faith and some concluding observations on how his beliefs translate into behaviour. He calls being in a position to count as little or nothing the ills and injustices of the earthly realm a "condition of happiness, strength, and freedom," and it is clear that most of the lessons thus far have been aimed at the cultivation of this condition. To help in achieving it, he practices "sublime contemplations" on the order of the universe, not to explain it of course, but simply to admire it. This is the only kind of conversing he does with God. He never prays, since to pray for His intervention would be to ask that the order be disturbed for one man's benefit. Of the less drastic act of praying for the power to do good, the Vicar asks "Why ask Him for what He has given me? Did He not give me conscience for loving the good, reason for knowing it, and liberty for choosing it? To ask him to change my will is to ask Him what He asks of me" (294a). As he has tried to show throughout the Profession, the Vicar clearly believes that we were made with the stuff to be happy and good. It is only when we lose sight of this that we degenerate to a condition of *at best* reformulating the good according to abstract, inevitably faulty reasoning, and *at worst* not caring about the issue anymore; in our philosophic vanity we may even think ourselves beyond it.

The idea the Vicar has developed, that man is a wonderful creation who has only been corrupted by his disordered society, is one that has been put forth before in both of Rousseau's Discourses. The Vicar's focus here

is different, but there are striking similarities to both these works and to the rest of Emile. This is not to say that Rousseau himself believes all the arguments of the Vicar, or is as convinced of them as the ecclesiastic professes to be (as was noted earlier, in his posthumously published Reveries he says that his views are "pretty much," or "almost" those of the Vicar). Evidence of potential hesitation on Rousseau's part is given by the reaction of the young narrator, who is deeply moved and generally persuaded of the ideas of the Vicar, but says that "Nevertheless I saw a multitude of objections to make to him" (294c). I believe that this is an invitation from Rousseau to consider the words of the Vicar most carefully, and an indication that doing so may provide insight to some of the subtle lessons that the political philosopher would give - or perhaps the 'dangerous truths' a philosopher would face - but which would not be obviously present in a good priest's profession. Since few if any of us can remain in skepticism, the Profession is more importantly an attempt at putting forth a coherent set of opinions that would be healthy to adopt in whatever degree it strikes us as true.

Chapter Four

"What piece of work is a man,
how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form
and moving how express and admirable, in action
how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god:
the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals..."

Hamlet (II.ii.303-7)

Despite the assertions of the Vicar and myself regarding the insufficiency of reason in determining the meaning of the cosmos, it would seem a valid tool in determining the meaning of something written by a political philosopher. In the last chapter, I showed how the Vicar deduced the existence of an omnipotent and thus just God from the affirmation of our shared experience (in some form) of order, innate goodness, conscience, a soul, free will, and other related notions. If we accept this deduction of an omnipotent God as a premise, and agree with the Vicar's arguments demonstrating the injustice of an intolerant revelation, then in his natural religion I believe he has a generally reasonable and persuasive account of what follows for us as human beings. As I said in Chapter Two, however, even if a philosopher made the same deductions from the premise of an omnipotent God, in his dedication to the truth he could not simply accept this premise as easily, if at all. Rousseau is certainly a philosopher, but a political one, and though his political side may preclude openly challenging the premise of God and suggesting the implications

which might follow,[59] we might suspect that the philosopher in him will, to some extent, subtly do so.

In this chapter I will consider Rousseau's subtle indications of potential disagreement with the Vicar, as I believe it is fruitful and necessary insofar as it would seem prudent to evaluate the philosophic status of the Profession for the political philosopher before considering its political implications. After all, if the Profession simply reflects what Rousseau believes, we can expect his political thought to be wholly derived from it, since the status of divine things (if known) would surely have primacy in all human matters to which they pertain. If he does not believe it, we would expect the converse: that the Profession is largely derived from his political thought in the same sort of way the discussion of the civil religion was, except with emphasis on the individual political animal. I will argue in this chapter that the Profession is neither simply what Rousseau believes, nor simply derived from his political thought. Rather, through the apparently 'unphilosophic' and 'unpolitical' Vicar, Rousseau relates his general observations about the status of certain phenomena crucial to our understanding of the human condition (most

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[59] In his article on the Profession, under a section entitled "The Political Meaning of the Profession of Faith," Arthur Melzer notes the caution one should expect Rousseau to use in writing on the subject of religion. After quoting the passage I cited in my Introduction from the Reveries, where Rousseau professes a (slightly qualified) agreement with the Vicar's beliefs, Melzer observes:

> Yet, even these qualified statements are open to question. When an ardently public-spirited thinker declares that belief in God is absolutely indispensable for the very survival of states and the happiness of most individuals, one cannot but suspect that, even if he did not himself believe, he might say he did. (Melzer 1996, 355)

Indeed, of all salutary opinions to preserve, belief in God would seem to be near the top of the list for the very reasons Rousseau advances in his attacks on the amorality of the materialistic atheists. It should be noted that something being salutary does not mean

notably the soul and its capacity to partake in a goodness or justice that seems divine).[60] In the course of presenting both his beliefs and uncertainties regarding these phenomena, he also indicates what he believes to be best to think and act in light of them. This would clearly be of the utmost significance in a philosophic sense for any reflective individuals striving to learn how best to live. Presumably, it would be at least a starting place to help them get off in the right direction, but even more so insofar as the Vicar's natural religion is the best for human beings. At the same time, through illustrating how both philosophy and organized religions fall short in engendering goodness in others, the Profession paves the way for politics, by tacitly leaving it as the best possibility for engendering this goodness in a group of people in any broad and lasting way.

To begin my critical analysis, I will argue that there seems to be a fourth 'article of faith', pertaining to the afterlife. It is useful for making the Vicar's case more persuasive, but does not follow logically from his argument as did the other three. In fact, it is the only major point on which I can see that Rousseau has the Vicar expressly contradict himself. Upon reflection, this contradiction betrays some uncertainty about not only the existence of the afterlife, but (because of a link made by the Vicar) all immaterial human entities such as will, conscience insofar as they could

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that it is not true. Admittedly, however, the difference between qualified, hesitant belief and qualified, hesitant, disbelief in this crucial matter would be subtle indeed.

[60] The goodness or justice in question may be in an important sense 'divine' by definition, since in looking for it, we are looking for that which permanently exists in a kind of higher realm - irrespective of whether it in fact exists apart from our imagination of it. Once decided upon, this becomes our 'religion', since no other faith can trump that which we believe to be truly good and just.

not exist as the Vicar believes them to were we to not in possession of an immaterial soul. This is not to say that it refutes the existence of things immaterial, but simply points to our seemingly inescapable ignorance regarding them. The inescapability of this ignorance leads the Vicar, in turn, to recommend something other than a life of pure contemplation. Rather, the life he holds up is one which strives to act in accordance with what we can *sense* or what *seems* to us to be good, using reason not as an absolute final authority but as a kind of subordinate tool. Regardless of the actual status of God, I will show that a careful consideration of the Profession shows that the thing Rousseau always ultimately indicates as fundamentally, universally, and 'divinely' good is the health of a political community, which alone among the human possibilities can optimize the happiness of all the individuals in it.

After giving his third article of faith the Vicar says, "From these three you will easily deduce the others without my continuing to count them out" (281a), which strongly intimates that there is at least one more. It is very suspicious that the Vicar would suddenly become cryptic with the youth when he has professed so adamantly a desire to be forthright, clear, and honest - and has appeared thus far to be so. This device is far more suited to a subtle political philosopher, and I think that there is something important being indicated by Rousseau in leaving a fourth article of faith unflagged. After making explicit what I see as the fourth article, I will explain why Rousseau refrains from having the Vicar overtly present it as such.

Not long after the third article of faith, the Vicar says that he is finished "deducing principal truths" (286c). Since the discussion of the afterlife is the only significant topic examined after the third article and takes up the bulk of this space, it is the most likely place to find a fourth. In his reflections on the subject of order in connection with the third article, one of the Vicar's key points is that any evil in the world is brought on man by himself. This is because "General evil can exist only in disorder, and I see in the system of the world an unfailing order" (282b). Not only is this universal order apparent to the Vicar, but he indicates that it is also the only thing that is required from a just and good God. This goodness of God is then asserted, coming from his omnipotence and the self-love that any being aware of himself necessarily possesses. The idea of wickedness coming from weakness is one that Rousseau states in different ways throughout Emile;[61] the Vicar puts it in converse terms here when he says "He who can do everything can only want what is good" (282c), to which Rousseau adds a footnote affirming that "His goodness comes from His power."

The Vicar then posits that God owes us what he promises us, and that giving us the idea of good and making us feel it is to promise it. He goes on to say:

> The more I return within myself, and the more I consult myself, the more I see these words written in my soul: Be just and you will be happy. This simply is not so, however, considering the

[61] Cf. 67a, where Rousseau directly mentions the Profession in his most thorough discussion of wickedness and weakness.

> present state of things: the wicked man prospers, and the just man remains oppressed. (282d)

According to the Vicar, this disparity causes "impatient mortals" to complain of God's injustice, not realizing that they are asking for the "wage before the work." It is at this point that I believe the Vicar gives a fourth article of faith (in the added italics), prefaced by some of his reasoning for it when he states:

> If the soul is immaterial, it can survive the body; and if it survives the body, providence is justified. If I had no proof of the immateriality of the soul other than the triumph of the wicked and the oppression of the just in this world, that alone would prevent me from doubting it. So shocking a dissonance in the universal harmony would make me seek to resolve it. I would say to myself, "*Everything does not end with life for us; everything returns to order at death.*" (283b)

I posit, then, that the fourth article of faith is that there is an afterlife. This strikes the Vicar as true insofar as a just God would be supremely unjust to allow the iniquities in this life to go unrequited. He could not allow the disorder here on earth to reign, for man, eternally supreme. This argument is expanded upon in the rest of the paragraph, with the Vicar pointing out that since the body and soul seem to be of such different substances, the destruction of one would in no way logically necessitate the destruction of the other; indeed, since the soul and body are in such conflict, they would return to their natural states at death. The soul, in giving life to the inert matter composing the body, would become unchained, fully active, free. The body, being a "passive and dead" substance would return to the condition of separable matter. "Alas!" the Vicar concludes, "I sense it

only too much by my vices: man lives only halfway during his life, and the life of the soul begins only with the death of the body" (283b).

This argument seems at first blush to be entirely reasonable, in that a just God could not allow the wicked to get ahead in this world as they seem regularly to do, and force the average good guy to grunt and sweat under a weary life - often for the profit of unjust men - just to survive. The soul living on after the death of the body was shown to be a logical possibility, and a life to come wherein God settles all accounts is a theme that underlies most (if not all) major religions. The Vicar even claims that any doubts about the existence of an immaterial soul that remain are thus mollified by the divine need for an afterlife. There is, however, a serious problem with the argument, in that it is premised on the "triumph of the wicked and the oppression of the just in this world." In Chapter Three, I explored the extensive arguments made by the Vicar that in fact the opposite is true: our conscience plagues us in our wickedness, and (at least in the long run) any baser advantages we accrue through evil exact a much bigger cost in the degradation of our souls and according diminution of our happiness. In making a case for the inherent benefits of being a just man, the Vicar clearly professes a belief that 'we get the souls we deserve', rather than 'through wickedness do we triumph'.

The idea that there is both prosperity in wickedness and oppression in justice in this world is not only key to his faith in the afterlife, but as the quote above indicates, the Vicar declares that it serves as sufficient "proof of the immateriality of the soul" in the face of any other doubts. Were this tenet to prove faulty, there would appear to be significant implications

indeed. In the next section, I will further clarify this important contradiction. In the section after that, I will explain that the afterlife might still be practically necessary because of the need for the demands of 'cosmic justice' to be met. The obstacle for this fulfillment arises out of the individual cases of injustice which seem inescapable on earth - at least insofar as no political regime is perfect, and perhaps in a broader sense given the vagaries of fortune. Accordingly, the Vicar's arguments for the *need* for an afterlife are not false, and we are not therefore forced to reject all notions linked to it. Rather, I will show that in examining his case for the afterlife - as in all matters that depend on something like a just God - we see that it ultimately requires faith. More importantly, however, the uncertainty which necessarily remains regarding the afterlife compels us to focus primarily on abiding by and encouraging justice in this world - and thus on politics. In the last section of the chapter, and by returning to the Social Contract in the next, I will show that these practical considerations match up with those philosophic - a symmetry which supports and reflects Rousseau's goal of making political health primary.

I shall now return to considering the 'prosperity of the wicked' - the existence of which was said to necessitate an afterlife. Extensive citations are not necessary for showing that the prescriptions the Vicar gives for being happy do not include performing successful wickedness. When defending the idea of innate conscience, the Vicar says, "the primary reward for justice is to sense that one practices it" (287b), not that one will go to heaven. I referred earlier to the punishment that conscience inflicts

upon wrongdoers (at least those not inhuman enough to be completely insensitive to it). While it is true that for some this punishment manifests itself as a fear of penance in the afterlife, only firm believers look at it this way; it is clear that less God-fearing people are still afflicted by this importunate voice. As we saw in the last chapter, the Vicar's principal goal seems to be to persuade his listener that the performance of good acts sometimes takes some effort, but that the joy this brings us is pure. Acts performed at another's expense usually produce at best a base profit, and if we enjoy them at all it is only by stifling our sociable, human side, and thereby creating an internal contradiction for ourselves that leads to a profound unhappiness.

After coming to the conclusion that "the good man orders himself in relation to the whole" (292a), the Vicar embarks upon a full examination of the much healthier approach to life that this observation brings. The recognition of a truly good order which is higher, but not reflected in our imperfect society, enables us to realign ourselves in accordance with a new set of priorities which do not cause us to violate our inner sense of goodness. Thus, the so-called suffering and oppression that may afflict the good man means much less in proportion to his ability to devote his cares to the spiritual, or contemplative realm. It is the care for the body that makes us selfish and go against the true, or natural general order. The spiritually sensitive man, however, has gained control over the whims and hollow passions of his corporeal side and is thus able to make "good use of the soul's liberty." This achievement then becomes its own reward in that it "prepares itself an *incorruptible happiness* in combating its terrestrial passions and maintaining itself in its first will" (292c, emphasis mine).

This condition could be seen as a veritable heaven on earth, in that the man in this condition has essentially eliminated the baseness and contradiction caused by the body even before he has died. If God has given us this ability to achieve an "incorruptible happiness" here on earth, has he not fulfilled that requirement which began the Vicar's case for the afterlife?[62] This idea of an adequate 'heaven on earth' is supported further by the suggestion of its opposite existing in our midst; the Vicar goes so far as to obviate the notion of eternal damnation by declaring that the suffering of the wicked begins in this life. The extent of the punishment of the wicked is made clear when the Vicar says:

> It is in your insatiable hearts, eaten away by envy, avarice, and ambition, that the avenging passions punish your heinous crimes in the bosom of your false prosperity. What need is there to look for hell in the other life? It begins in this one in the hearts of the wicked. (284b)

By the same logic, we might well wonder if the notion of eternal happiness is equally expendable.

In the above quote, along with the indication that the afterlife may not be necessary, comes the related amendment of the Vicar's premise for the afterlife regarding the prosperity of the wicked - which was asserted only a page earlier. Here, he labels this 'prosperity' *false*, thus indicating that 'prosperity' commonly conceived is not necessarily advantageous at all. Despite any surpluses in things such as power, glory, or riches that

[62]The Vicar said that "In making us feel the good He must promise it to us."

wicked men may accrue, unlike the good man they will not achieve peace of mind and contentedness with themselves. More importantly, they will be too petty both to share the appreciation of the glory of nature that the good man will surely possess, and to find the satisfaction he does in being a well-ordered part of it.

The suggestion one might take from this is that nothing needs to be evened out after life on earth, because the workings of human nature are such that everything is taken care of during it. Given the implications of this regarding the powerful impetus to moral action we find in the fear (or love) of divine justice, we might wonder what effect this flaw in the case for a 'divine reckoning' might have on morality. If one takes the teaching of the Vicar seriously, and is persuaded by the reasoning behind it, it should in no way impact our incentive to do good insofar as he demonstrates that wicked actions never profit because they diminish our true *earthly* happiness. In fact, his belief in a divine hand is assumed only after discovering the beautiful order it has created. For the Vicar, then, earthly justice does not rely on faith in a just God, but he is nonetheless led to believe in Him because no other explanation suffices for the goodness in what has been Created. The Vicar's case is analogous to someone having faith in the skill of a watchmaker after observing the order by which his watch operates, instead of believing in a watch's order out of faith in the skill of its watchmaker.

So why, then, is this emphasis on the afterlife even necessary - let alone used to buttress his beliefs - when it is supported by what is actually a contradictory argument? Also, in recalling how important the so-called

'unjust' state of earthly things was to the Vicar's faith in the afterlife (and also in re-affirming the existence of the soul as immaterial), what implications might this contradiction have? Here is where I see evidence of a subtle political and philosophic teaching, and the hand of Rousseau the political philosopher guiding this 'unpolitical' and 'unphilosophic' Profession.

Having expanded upon the flaw in the Vicar's case for the afterlife, I will now suggest why there is a clear sense in which belief in the afterlife is a politically (or practically) valuable opinion in and of itself, before turning to why it may be philosophically (or theoretically) valid in spite of the apparent flaw in the Vicar's case for it. I mentioned at the end of the previous section that the Vicar's attempt to persuade the youth of the inherent benefits of living justly did not rely on the afterlife. There are unquestionably people who virtually always do good, believing it to be its own reward, and do so without any sustained or rigorous reflection. For these people, whether or not there is an afterlife makes little difference because they believe as the Vicar does that wickedness could never be worth performing. Of course, for various reasons, there are always enough others who do not share this conviction for it to be a problem. The 'prosperity' of immoral actions - regardless of its superficiality or the price in corruption one must pay for it - has always enticed a significant proportion of people. In the spirit of the image of an angel and devil perched on opposite shoulders, when one is faced with a moral decision as to whether to perform an act which will bring money, fame, glory or some

other earthly pleasure - but risks a possible reproach of conscience - it should hardly be surprising that the devil will at least occasionally win out. People understand what the consequences are, they have felt those pangs of conscience, and accordingly if they deem the prize large enough and the regret small enough, they will sometimes proceed to do patently immoral if not heinous acts.

It is clear that different people have different motivations to be both good and bad. Despite the Vicar's claims of simplicity, it would seem that only an unusually reflective person would arrive at the position of comprehensively persuading oneself of the value of always being good. As to being persuaded by the Vicar's arguments, or something like them, this condition would seem to be open to a wider group of people, but undoubtedly in a less profound way. This idea of being educated to be good will be taken up in the next chapter, but it is clearly something that the Vicar engages in for the benefit of the youth.

No practical scheme of education would seem able to instill virtue in all its pupils, however, and this is where that most overtly political element of enforced law arises as an additional factor in the decisions of potential wrong-doers - especially in regard to the most serious acts.[63] But its failure to catch all criminals provides hope for those who think that they

[63] As with education, the making and enforcing of law is obviously the function of government and the Legislator. Good laws, well enforced, can be seen as a way for the government to encourage people to be good - which is good for them even if it is out of a low motive. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Five, though, Rousseau makes clear that the government is responsible for more than just law-making (my next example of social censure somewhat captures what this is). See also the chapter "On Censorship" in the Social Contract.

can beat the law, and clearly there always remain enough people confident that they can for this to be a recurring problem for society. Still, a person would have to add the punishment of the law into their calculations, and this is undoubtedly a strong point in the little angel's favour when applicable. Nevertheless, the little devil still manages to get people to break the law, and to do many other extralegal evils.

In mentioning 'extralegal evils', another shortcoming of the law is raised in that it does not apply to all or even most moral situations. Traditionally, the fear of being looked down upon or even shunned by society has been a third factor along with conscience and the law in preventing and punishing immoral activities. This cannot be dismissed as a potentially effective force; it suffices to cite situations such as a powerful man avoiding immoral activity for fear of a scandal, or a teenager for fear of disappointing his mother. Regardless of the questionable nobility of the motive, people are clearly guided towards good for the sake of their reputations. However, as evidenced in all kinds of situations and for all sorts of reasons, the power (and will) of society to encourage proper behaviour by the threat of stigmatization is steadily decreasing, and was never totally effective in that (as with the law) enough people will always expect, or at least hope, to escape detection.[64]

[64] Besides the general liberalization of society's morals, or perhaps in part because of it, the balance between the law and social censure is clearly shifting. This is especially evident in the civil law courts of the U.S. where people are being sued for various things that would previously only have brought them a bad reputation. I believe that this has emerged out of a need for society to somehow replace the role played by social stigmatization, which is not nearly as powerful as it once was. Nonetheless, the fear of shame before others should certainly be included along with the fear of conscience, law, and God as a factor for many.

It is here that the threat of some kind of divine sanction becomes useful as a fourth type of motivation in persuading individuals to live morally or to create a moral society. While an actor may be willing to accept the foreseeable trouble his conscience may give him, or risk the censure of the law or society when applicable, the punishment that may be meted out in the undiscovered country can serve as a great deterrent indeed. This, like the other negative forms of behaviour improvement, may not make a person 'noble', but it can still prevent many people from further degrading their souls. In focusing on the political motive, however, we face the same problem that I illustrated regarding the civil religion: political utility is no reason for people to believe in anything, only a reason for legislators and other opinion leaders who are concerned for the polity to foster the belief of it.

There is no question but that the political effects or consequences of faith are important to Rousseau, and as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, are a consideration for the Vicar in the Profession as well. Before turning to that, however, I hope to show that the 'flaw' in the Vicar's reasoning about the afterlife does not indicate that political health is *all* that Rousseau is concerned with in either the Vicar's consideration of the afterlife, or in his Profession generally.

Despite the self-restraint of the Vicar, or Jean-Jacques' hopes for Emile, just as the 'true Christian' would no longer be a man, neither is the

Vicar's man of 'pure spirit' one. Though certainly some are able to minimize the influence of bodily desires to a profound degree, and all wish to reduce their influence to some extent, paying attention to what happens to our body - as exemplified in the Vicar's erotic confessions - is as inescapable as the body itself. Not only is it accordingly easy to be 'materialistic' to some degree, but necessary. Besides the desires of the body thus gaining validity, our perception of various types of earthly suffering must also be acknowledged as real.

This recognition of the necessity of our bodily duality (or 'duality in our being') is, I believe, key to making sense of the case for the afterlife. Through it, we can see that the Vicar's placing the bulk of his reasoning on the prosperity of the wicked - while also arguing that their prosperity is false and a cause of misery - is not fatal to the idea. Rather, it seems simply to reflect our duality. That true happiness depends on being just can be acknowledged while at the same time allowing that some evil-doers may be happier than others who are generally good. This is in part because, as the Vicar says, many people focus on the lower side of themselves, ignoring or stifling the higher. This being the case, when the wicked prosper in ways that others misguidedly desire, it appears to them that wickedness does pay off, and they are made unhappy by their relatively impoverished position. At the material level, which concerns everybody to some extent and some people almost entirely, the practice and cultivation of virtues such as kindness, wisdom, or moderation rarely pays off, and never pays big. Other respectable qualities such as industriousness and hard work often do, but too often only when combined with amoral talents. On the other hand, immoral practices such as lying,

cheating, and stealing (when done successfully) generate material success, and this, for most people, is directly linked to any notion of 'prosperity'.

This misalignment, as I will explain in the next chapter, can largely be attributed to a poor education, and the corresponding unhealthy opinions in a society which are reflected in and reinforced by this education. This theme is clearly of central importance to Rousseau, but brings into question the responsibility of those unwittingly tainted by a bad environment. When one recalls the Vicar's pronouncement that conscience "no longer speaks to us" (291a), there seems to be a profound problem for those subject to a bad education that is to a large extent beyond their control.[65] It thus brings into question the extent to which we possess free will, and the capacity to be virtuous through a conscious, often difficult, choice that comes with it. In addition to the indirect causation of self-destructive wickedness on the part of the individuals nurtured within a flawed polity, there is the injustice in the world that is directly brought about by political regimes, or at least those we consider unjust. Finally, there are those who suffer in truly 'unfortunate' ways - that is to say not as a consequence of anything they could reasonably seem to be responsible for.

Bad education, bad politics, and bad luck are all apparently unjust cases of suffering, and there are sufficient examples of them throughout the world and its history to lead one to believe that injustice is intrinsic to

[65] This troubling idea of a silenced conscience (and the related loss of free-will) is mitigated to some extent by the Vicar a few lines later when he says not that the situation is hopeless, but that today it is simply "difficult" to "recall" our divine voice.

the human condition. Recall, though, that despite the existence of these seemingly endless sources of injustice which seem to violate the Providence that a just God might be expected to provide, the Vicar asserts the existence of His justice nonetheless. Providence is not only referred to in a number of places by the Vicar (especially in his discussion of order and virtue), but Rousseau himself refers to it in the civil profession of faith in the Social Contract. Its status is clearly important, since it can be interpreted so as to verify or refute the existence of a just God. In anyone's faith in God, they must account for the continual harms in life that are inflicted upon people who are in no reasonable way responsible for them.

While surely cutting short much of the consideration this difficult subject deserves, for our purposes here I suggest we look to the Vicar's discussion of God giving us the "right to virtue" (281b). Here he explains why the existence of evil is necessary, and likewise our capacity to do it. Without an ability to do bad, he points out, there would be no such thing as virtue - the capacity for which places us above all other beings.[66] There might also be a virtue-enhancing side to misfortunes. Experience shows us, for example, that he who puts the most effort into avoiding misfortunes often has the least. But there need to be exceptions to this rule, or else we would never be tempted to cheat life: if we knew that a lack of effort beforehand *always* resulted in a bigger harm later, it would only be the

[66] There is an indication in the Vicar's discussion of virtue that man is capable of surpassing even God on the scale of virtue. If God is omnipotent, He would seem capable only of goodness, not evil, and thus not virtue (Cf. 278b, 281b, 282c). To this extent, then, we are *not* made in his image. In fact, his greatest act may have been to Create in us a capacity he lacks.

fool who tried to take short cuts, and there would be nothing really admirable in the man who put in the necessary effort. This reasoning works just as clearly when it comes to immorality and wickedness. If nobody profited from bad behaviour, who would do it? There has to be some kind of potential profit so that the virtuous man is tempted to do it, and has thus achieved something meritorious in doing the good.

The existence of individual cases of injustice appears to be part of the general order that the Vicar places so much emphasis on. Part of this order seems to require that there are always individuals who are rewarded unfairly. There will have to be those who prepare but suffer misfortune anyway, those who are good but have evil randomly inflicted upon them, and even those who prosper, however superficially, from wickedness. It is the 'unprovidentiality' of this necessity - and the accordingly inescapable iniquity apparent in the human condition - which makes an afterlife required for cosmic justice.

The final significant factor in the human condition that might point to the necessity of an afterlife is the apparently unprovidential injustice in many political regimes. A mitigating point, however, may be the fact that the status of one's political regime is not determined purely by chance, especially for the few who found or run it. While for the ordinary person stuck in a totalitarian regime, being so may seem as beyond one's control as having one's town wiped out by a mudslide. Nevertheless, there is a respect in which governments are not completely determined by external forces - just as there are ways to guard against a mudslide wiping out one's town. Given the human control over this, politics should perhaps be

considered less in the realm of providence/afterlife than the completely fated things. Obviously, the onus for remedying political evils falls far more directly upon rulers than upon the ruled. But others, too, would have a duty in this regard insofar as they are in a position to improve their regime (such as a political philosopher by way of his ability to affect the ideas of justice in his polity).

By going through some of the reasons why the afterlife may be necessary, I hope to have indicated why the Vicar might profess a belief in it while stressing a very this-world outlook. While the contradiction regarding the afterlife may be tempered by showing that many desire 'prosperity' regardless of its being of a false sort, or by pointing to the real, unjust suffering in the world wrought by fortune or politics that seems to demand an afterlife, the Vicar nonetheless contradicts himself. What does this mean for Rousseau? Because Rousseau's Vicars hold the need for the soul living on as a counter to any remaining doubts regarding its immateriality (283b) - but at the same time he indicates the possibility of a kind of 'incorruptible happiness', or heaven on earth - the mind/body duality fundamental to the Vicar may still be somewhat questionable. This, in turn, may lead one to question the status of various immaterial phenomena related to the soul.

The most significant of these (other than God) and the most pertinent, is conscience. The Vicar places considerably more emphasis on it than on the afterlife, and conscience can be seen, essentially, as its equivalent on earth - the realm where both Rousseau and the Vicar are focused. What makes conscience an even better case study than the

afterlife is that it gives us an inner witness that helps persuade us of our bodily duality (not to mention our social one). I suggested in Chapter Three that Rousseau was making an honest challenge through the Vicar in having him say:

> If conscience is the work of prejudices, I am doubtless wrong, and there is no demonstrable morality. But if to prefer oneself to everything is an inclination natural to man, and if nevertheless the first sentiment of justice is innate in the human heart, let him who regards man as a simple being overcome these contradictions, and I shall no longer acknowledge more than one substance. (279b)

It is a crucial point, as the existence of two substances is critical for the Vicar's central tenets of both the afterlife and conscience, not to mention the soul, freedom, and God. Through the Vicar, I believe that Rousseau takes steps to "overcome these contradictions" by showing that whether this is a 'divine' substance in us or not makes little practical difference, in that justice is innate regardless. Man is by nature concerned with his well-being, but also by nature a social animal (or at least made to become so)[67] and a wholesome society is inconceivable without justice. Accordingly, whether it is placed there by society or God, there are many of the same implications. It is by no means contradictory to be concerned with both one's self and one's community, but nonetheless some sacrifice of personal (at least short-term) advantage is often required for the sake of maintaining a wholesome society. It is, ultimately, this kind of sacrifice that can make us both a good citizen and a happy person, for if we do

[67] In Chapter Three I explained why I believe that this is not only the Vicar's view but also Rousseau's.

everything for ourselves, we will inevitably find at the end of our life that all we have done will die with us - in effect making our lives irrelevant to anything that will go on. It is as a parent and citizen (and, one imagines, as a civically-directed craftsman such as a teacher, soldier, or philosopher) that we can perform acts serving causes bigger than ourselves, and thus make our lives relevant.

This would potentially lead back to the criticism that conscience may be some kind of construct of self-serving societal fabrication, to which one would initially turn to the Vicar's arguments against the 'prejudice argument' for a response. But insofar as we have a vested interest in the preservation of our society as an orderly one, it is still a good guide - even if it is prejudiced towards the opinions of the polity. The Vicar's illustration of the misery caused by being entirely selfish is not falsified by the recognition that the natural voice within us that is prejudiced towards the wellness of our polity in our capacity as a citizen, our family in our capacity as a family member, and mankind in our capacity as humans, may not be divine.

I have tried to show that the Vicar's 'flaw' simply reflects our necessary uncertainty about the afterlife, and should lead us to question some of the other importantly related elements of the Profession – all elements that no philosopher, to my knowledge, has thus far been able to demonstrate any persuasive certainty about. Ultimately, however, I believe that the necessary difficulty in fully accounting for some of the Vicar's tenets does not compromise the core of his teaching, since Rousseau was surely aware of its shortcomings. Instead, this difficulty has

the practical and theoretical effect of compelling us to turn toward the political realm, where it seems most clear that earthly justice - the only one we can get a good sense of - can be best approximated.

Chapter Five

"We all do no end of feeling, and we mistake it for thinking. And out of it we get an aggregation which we consider a Boon. Its name is Public Opinion. It is held in reverence. It settles everything. Some think it is the Voice of God. Pr'aps.

Mark Twain, *Corn-Pone Opinions*, 1901

The Legislator is a character who does not seem to fit in with the rest of the Social Contract, wherein Rousseau systematically presents the formal institutional architecture of a legitimate republic. Whatever one's evaluation of this ideal social contract and the regime that results, it seems for the most part to share the flaw that befalls most ideals: extremely unlikely ever actually to exist. Given where Rousseau leaves modern society at the end of the Second Discourse, this ideal regime could never come to be without, at a minimum, a radical reversal in the historical deterioration of society.[68] He gives little indication of the likelihood of even this happening, never mind the other developments on which the implementation of the Social Contract would seem to depend. In fact, throughout this detailed description of how an ideal democracy would work, and why it must be structured as he describes, we are given no indication *how* anything like it might actually come about. That is, until exactly one-third of the way through the book (i.e. the 16th of 48

[68] There is some indication that a sufficiently 'primitive' society might also work, but a wholesale political revolution of some kind seems more like what Rousseau calls for. Why the French Revolution failed to accomplish what Rousseau had in mind is something I cannot begin to treat in this thesis.

chapters), where Rousseau introduces the character without whom the whole enterprise would apparently never succeed: the Legislator. The description of his task, though, and indeed the book generally, are lacking in the same way that I showed "On Civil Religion" to be; namely, they are deficient at the individual level insofar as they describe what the best form of government and religion would be, but lack arguments for the necessary step of convincing the citizenry. In this final chapter, I will explain how the Legislator needs a religious message to put Rousseau's guidelines into practice. I will then show that the Profession contains what is needed for both the civil religion and the Legislator, predominantly through its breaking down traditional notions of religion while maintaining or re-establishing faith in a God who desires the well-being of the state.

Who is this Legislator? He is described twice, first with general attributes, then with regard to a specific task he must be able to perform. With regard to the former Rousseau says:

> The discovery of the best rules of society would require a superior intelligence, who saw all of men's passions yet experienced none of them; who had no relationship at all to our nature yet knew it thoroughly; whose happiness was independent of us, yet who was nevertheless willing to attend to ours; finally one who, preparing for himself a future glory with the passage of time, could work in one century and enjoy the reward in the other. (SC 67-8)

The magnitude of such requirements is evident in the next sentence when Rousseau concludes, "Gods would be needed to give laws to men."[69]

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[69] In the "Geneva Manuscript," the early draft of the Social Contract, Rousseau had said, "A God would be needed to give the human race good laws...the shepherds of

Rousseau proceeds to set his Legislator even above great princes by pointing out that the ruler only operates the machine that the Legislator invents.[70] This divine or almost divine estimation of the Legislator is warranted given the description of the task he must be able to perform. Not only does he have to be above the passions and nature of common men, but he must be able to raise them above their condition as well. He must be:

> Capable of changing human nature, so to speak; of transforming each individual, who by himself is a perfect and solitary whole into part of a larger whole from which this individual receives, in a sense, his life and being...of substituting a partial and moral

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men, who are their leaders, ought to be of a more excellent species than the people" (SC 179). I am hesitant to put too much stock in the "Geneva Manuscript" for interpretive purposes, since it is never clear whether Rousseau is obscuring things in the final version, or simply correcting errors. Nonetheless, it makes for an interesting comparison, especially in regard to the opening and the two chapters I am considering.

[70] It should be noted here that though he indicates generally that the Legislator is the founder who steps away once the laws and institutions are in place and secure, Rousseau at one point gives the responsibility of putting the machine together and starting it running to the "prince" (SC 68), not the Legislator. By giving what would seem to be the 'activity' of founding to a strictly political man, Rousseau is perhaps hinting that the Legislator may only be a political philosopher, whose book provides sufficient guidance for a prince. It is not entirely clear whether the Legislator is to put into practice the principles in the Social Contract or simply adjust them to a specific time and place so that a "prince" has a thorough groundwork to implement. The notion of a prince implementing the system is problematic in that he would assume the power which the Legislator's magnanimity ensures will not be abused. There are a number of problems with the idea that the Legislator would entrust another with the implementation, and since Rousseau speaks of the need for the Legislator to have sufficient power to change and affect people directly - not just write about them - I will continue to consider the Legislator as a founder, who steers the ship until his system is fully implemented. We should not dismiss, however, the possibility that by transforming ideas of justice through political philosophy one could change people sufficiently such that they would be compelled to enact the appropriate political change.

existence for the physical and independent existence we have all received from nature. (SC 68)

An extraordinary task indeed. Nonetheless, given Rousseau's premise that it is the way that modern society sets us in contradiction with ourselves that makes it and us corrupt, something like this seems to be necessary. The adoption of a kind of civic devotion and the eradication of purely individual consideration is exemplified for Rousseau in Sparta and the best Romans,[71] and his goal is to develop a modern system that approximates this in the best way possible. Since a certain level of interdependence between person and polity is unavoidable in any society, Rousseau strives to make it as thorough as possible, seeing that expanding the scope of love of one's own such that it includes the whole polity is the way to preserve wholeness and unity in the individual. Only by making him completely interdependent, which has the effect of making the individual's good the same as that of the whole, can the Legislator clear the way for the rule of the true general will as opposed to the unacceptable variants of it and other types of rule.[72]

The need for this alignment of private and general wills for the sake of each - whence the necessity of the Legislator comes - is outlined just

[71] This is exemplified, for example, in the outset of Emile where Rousseau describes the perfect male and female Spartan citizens (40), and also in his frequent praise of Cato.

[72] By this I mean versions of the general will which are tainted by individual or factional interests, as well as the majority of kinds of rule which historically have not even claimed to rule according to the general will. At best these types of rule were purported to be in accordance with the general *good*, but always according to the will of the ruler or rulers.

before the chapter "On the Legislator." In an especially rich paragraph at end of the chapter "On Law," Rousseau raises the problem of making laws that truly represent the general will. The first obstacle cited is the fact that the body politic has trouble enunciating its will. But it is in need of something more important than a collective 'mouth' to speak with - it needs a brain with foresight and clear thinking. This lack is likely one of the first objections a skeptical reader would address to Rousseau, given his belief in the need for the pure general will to govern. He brings attention to this challenge himself by rhetorically asking "How will a blind multitude, which often does not know what it wants because it rarely knows what is good for it, carry out by itself an undertaking as vast and as difficult as a system of legislation?" His answer consists of an interesting contrast between the individual and the group, wherein he points out that individually we see the good (presumably through something like an innate conscience) but lack the inclination or will-power to perform it. The dilemma for the group is the opposite, as they always have the will to do good, but have trouble seeing it clearly. His conclusion for both is that they "are equally in need of guides" (SC 67). The Legislator is to reconcile both, and the Social Contract is evidently the textbook that describes the system whereby the group can best enunciate their will to do good. This may be the remedy for the malady of de-unification in understanding and will in the social group, but the remedy to be used for the individual - in need of something to unify his potentially sufficient understanding with his likely insufficient will - is left unprescribed.

The Vicar and the Profession come to mind here. In it, the Vicar wants to compel the youth to listen to the sense of good within him by

showing him that following it in spite of other inclinations is always its own reward. As an initial observation, then, we see that the tasks of Rousseau's two characters are complementary: part of the Vicar's goal is to strengthen the will, and unify it with the inner sense of good he naturally possesses; part of the Legislator's goal is to strengthen the people's ability to correctly 'consense' upon the good, and unify it with the will to enact it which they naturally possess. When considering the Legislator's requisite ability to make the citizen more civic-minded, however, it seems that he is to do both. In fact, his task can be reduced to these two essential elements: transforming the individual's natural selfish inclinations into a devotion to the general good, and providing a set of laws and law-making institutions that allow the general good, made manifest by the 'general will', to be properly known and implemented. The first part of the task directly relates to the work of the Vicar, however, and after clarifying the difficulties in the Legislator's task, I will explore its compatibility with what the Vicar does.

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Rousseau indicates that there are two main obstacles for the Legislator to overcome in carrying out the two parts of his task. First, the likelihood of each of the two elements coming to be relies on the other being already well established. Without the individuals as citizens possessing the social spirit that allows them to be the means whereby the general will can be expressed, there is nothing to ensure that the laws will actually manifest the common good. On the other hand, if there is not a set of laws and institutions to engender the transformation from individual to citizen (both actively and indirectly through the citizens seeing the goodness of it), it is difficult to see how this social spirit can be created.

"The effect would have to become the cause;" Rousseau explains, "the social spirit, which should be the result of the institution, would have to preside over the institution itself; and men would have to be prior to the laws what they ought to become by means of laws" (SC 69).

The Legislator is the means whereby this virtuous circle is made entire, accomplishing both himself until they can mutually secure each other. Here arises the second obstacle he must overcome, one which he more or less shares with the Vicar. In transforming the individual into a citizen, he cannot rely on force, reason, or conventional authority, just as the Vicar could not compel the youth to see that his outlook was correct by threatening him, proving it logically, or simply citing revelation as authoritative. Yet the Legislator, like the Vicar, must persuade profoundly. The reason neither *force* nor *authority* can be used should be clear. The reason *reason* alone is insufficient for the Legislator is primarily because of the Platonic observation outlined earlier in my thesis: the many are not capable of understanding the difficult ideas of which the Legislator must have a clear understanding to perform his task. Rousseau confirms this when he declares that "there are a thousand ideas that are impossible to translate into the language of the people. Overly general views and overly remote objects are equally beyond its grasp" (SC 69). It is crucial that the Legislator persuade the people of his prescription for them, but doing so presents quite a challenge, given that he cannot avail himself of force, assumed authority, or even the reasoning behind his system.[73]

[73] A possible difference between the Vicar and Legislator is that the system of the latter can be rationally grasped; the invocation of the Gods by the Legislator is only to

The need to overcome this dilemma is "what has always forced the fathers of nations to have recourse to the intervention of heaven and to attribute their own wisdom to the Gods" (SC 69). As Rousseau makes clear in "On Civil Religion," though, for many reasons this cannot be the God or gods of any established religions; neither can this divine wisdom be simply that of any revelation. Without these options, it seems that the Legislator must either radically transform and re-establish an existing idea of God,[74] or create a new one. How is this to happen? Rather than stone tablets or some kind of Divine intervention, it is apparently the "great soul" of the Legislator that "is the true miracle that should prove his mission." This seems only to return to the original dilemma, however, since it would seem no more likely that the Legislator's "great soul" would suffice to persuade the many than that his "sublime reason" would - if it was truly great, it is hard to imagine how it would be widely recognized. Rousseau seems opposed to the use of miracles because it is the kind of foundation that later ages and reflective men may dismiss as the Vicar does (and, more instructively, as the *philosophes* did). However, in that he concedes that the miracles of Moses and Mohammed provided a "fleeting bond", he indicates its acceptability as a way to gain the initial allegiance that makes possible the institution of wise laws. Since we might wonder how the Legislator could demonstrate his "great soul" to those presumably

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persuade those who are not "moved by human prudence." It is worth noting that prudence may have a prominent role to play in the Vicar's drama as well when the implications of our uncertainty regarding the cosmos (especially that of a providential afterlife) are properly considered.

[74] This would seem to be something like what Calvin did in Geneva, but - judging from both the Profession and Social Contract - keeping the Bible as a purely divine source does not appear to be an option for Rousseau's Legislator.

incapable of recognizing one as truly so, something more superficial may be initially necessary.

The other sense in which the Legislator might have recourse to the Gods is the way in which the Vicar does. Through the Vicar, one could argue that Rousseau is attempting to persuade people of what is good and just by first appealing to their prudence, but then adding a divine element to his sensible arguments. As I have said already, the Vicar presumes a just God only after finding the just order in mankind - he does not rely on Him as the source of his discoveries. Both the Vicar and the Legislator are trying to persuade us of something difficult to convince anyone of fully, yet something all of us want to believe: that we can be happy and valuable parts of a greater good. If we believe that God would want nothing less for us, and we can be persuaded that He would put this capacity in our hearts and in our polity, it will add essential resolve to our conviction regarding the arguments made both by the Vicar and Legislator, and ultimately by Rousseau himself.

As I outlined in Chapter One, much is said in general terms at the end of the Social Contract regarding how a religion could be politically suitable. But this discussion (along with that of the laws) deals more with the need to solidify and maintain civic virtue in people than it does with creating it. The discussion of civil religion is mainly concerned with what it should *not* be, arguing for the things to look out for politically so that patriotism is not eroded by religion, but instead can flourish with its help. Only briefly does it outline the minimally essential points of faith that

correspond to the kind of political regime that the rest of the book supports. The same deficiencies in the discussion of the civil religion which I suggested compel us to look to the Profession to implement it can be seen to be present in the case of the Legislator. The rest of my thesis will consist of an investigation into how the Profession fills the substantial gaps in the Social Contract. These result from both the solely political treatment of religion and the sparse discussion of the method to be used by the Legislator to generate faith in the laws of the polity, make the citizens more civic-minded, and convince people that his wisdom is divine.

I will begin with a look at how the Legislator's description and task match up with what we see in the Vicar. Returning to the original five criteria in the Legislator's description (SC 67-8), they clearly do not all fit the Vicar. Regarding the Legislator's intelligence, though the Vicar is certainly insightful and reasonable - especially in his understanding of human inclinations - it is more his practice than his theory that is truly remarkable.[75] The one criterion where the Vicar seems most qualified is the fourth, that of having an independent happiness but tending to that of others nonetheless. The fifth quality, that of working towards a 'future glory', does not seem applicable to the Vicar insofar as he only wants to

[75] My estimation of his intelligence depends on whether the Vicar is aware of the philosophic inferences I attributed to Rousseau in Chapter Four that come out of his contradictions. I have argued that Rousseau used the character of the Vicar to make a case for goodness, justice, and virtue that is possible from a less complicated (but by no means simplistic) view of both our direct experience with the world and inferences we might make about the justice of our Creator. To say that the Vicar knows that his profession is simplified and flawed and that he is merely trying to teach the youth a salutary lesson while pointing to a more profound lesson is to erase the distinction between him and Rousseau. Though this may be correct, I have maintained the distinction.

provide immediate guidance to a troubled youth, and far from immortalizing his message by, say, writing it down, the Vicar says to the youth that "You are perhaps the only one to whom I shall ever tell it" (310b).

The second and third criteria, about the Legislator understanding our passions and nature yet not feeling them, are also not appropriate as descriptions of the Vicar. On the one hand, they seem to touch on the most powerful quality of the Vicar, that being his control and awareness of the power of passions and inclination. But the Vicar makes it clear that these are not to be entirely eliminated but rather ordered properly towards true happiness - he does not set himself apart from ordinary human nature. His inability or unwillingness to follow the regulations of chastity, despite the importance placed on it by the Church he follows so strictly in other respects, exemplifies this brilliantly. The Vicar indicates a belief that he exercised his eroticism in a just fashion; the fact that he was punished for it only exposed a fundamental injustice in his religion and society.

One might argue that the control of the human passions that the Vicar has gained is equivalent to 'seeing them but not experiencing them' insofar as an essential element of the passions might be the uncontrollable part. It would seem impossible, however, to claim that the Vicar has 'no relation to our nature'. At the same time, it is difficult to understand exactly what this could mean. We know that the Legislator is to transform other people's natures from being independent and selfish to interdependent and civic-minded. Given Rousseau's emphasis on the need for a kind of compelling concern for the welfare of the polity on the part of

the Legislator - both so that he does not abuse his power and so that he directs his abilities towards the polity in the first place - we might assume that a suitable Legislator possesses a form of the desired kind of nature already. But in describing this civic-mindedness, Rousseau indicates that for those the Legislator must alter, it will be a kind of 'better opinion', as opposed to sharing 'the truth'. It is hard to imagine that the Legislator is, like the Vicar, embarking on a kind of profession of his own condition to those who are potentially his equals, with the hope of them feeling his public-spiritedness and responsibility as strongly; instead, it is more like a guiding of lessers, into the healthier condition of being passionately (i.e. subrationally) devoted patriots.[76] In contrast to the Vicar's profession, the Legislator is the only one who need understand his rationale.

This point illustrates a fundamental difference between the Vicar and the Legislator that emerges from the claim that the latter must have a superior nature, while it would seem that the former does not. The Vicar's greatness comes not from being naturally better, but from doing so much towards making himself as good as he can, given the human condition that he shares with all of us.[77] He has created a kind of incorruptible happiness for himself, and though it is potentially to the benefit of others should they

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[76] This is not to say that the Legislator would not be exercising the highest kind of patriotism, nor that this might not have its own kind of faith involved.

[77] The importance for Rousseau of someone setting an example to inspire and provide a model of imitation rather than speeches about what one should do is examined by Christopher Kelly (1986). The Legislator's "great soul" proving his mission is an example of this, but I think that the profound impression made by the Vicar on the youth is another, perhaps more durable, type. This also explains Rousseau's admiration of Plutarch, who taught about virtue and other qualities strictly from examples. Perhaps with the Vicar, Legislator, Emile's tutor, and even himself, Rousseau is in a way emulating Plutarch's style. Cf. Emile 239-43, 247-9, and Melzer (1990) pp. 232, 242-48.

emulate him, it is something that does not intrinsically rely on them. He is our equal who has made himself better, and wishes to have the dissolute youth (and presumably everyone else) share the peace and happiness that comes from his outlook on things. The Legislator appears to be of an entirely different sort. He has the innate greatness to know what is best for the multitude, and make them achieve it whether they understand it or not. He does not have a happiness we can emulate, but creates one for us. He is not, as the Vicar is, benevolently *sharing* his ideas and ignorance about God to help persuade people of the healthy and reasonable moral outlook that *seems* best to him. Rather, the Legislator is benevolently *using* other's ideas and ignorance about God to persuade them to give themselves up freely to the political system that *is* best for them.

So the Vicar and the Legislator are clearly different sorts of characters in Rousseau's project, with intentions and methods that are related but different. But to say that the Vicar sincerely professes his beliefs to the youth (as opposed to calculating the most salutary message) is not to suggest that they, along with his example, are not meant to have political significance. Nor does it preclude this creation of Rousseau's having struck upon something of the truth regarding these difficult matters. As has been suggested, it is quite possible that the truth, or the most accurate image of it we can discern, need not be contrary to what is politically healthy. In fact, with faith in a benevolent God and recognition that He seems to have made sociality inextricable from our existence, it is reasonable to have faith in a positive relation between the 'truth' and the 'politically healthy' (or 'best opinion') - despite what the philosophers might like to think. Having introduced the role of the Legislator, and

shown how he is in important ways a quite different character than the Vicar in Rousseau's political project, I will now turn to an examination of the ways in which these two characters and their projects are inter-related.

One of the Legislator's main goals is to replace selfishness with a moral, interdependent existence. As noted above, this is the essence of what the Vicar is trying to do. The good priest wants us not to ignore our self-interest, but to see that - whether we acknowledge it or not - how we interact with others and our contribution to their well-being affects our own happiness. Only if the Legislator were to persuade his prospective citizens of this would his immense task of channeling a moral, social sentiment into a legitimate political system become possible. This would not only be good politically, but good simply. As I have indicated, Rousseau sees internal contradiction as always bad. Since we are inescapably tied to some kind of social relations (natural or not), the alignment of the individual's interest with those of his group is good for both. This is the primary regard in which I see a crucial similarity between the two characters.

Even granting the importance of this similarity, we still must consider whether Rousseau means to indicate that the substance of the Profession is suitable for the requirements of the political project. This can be divided into two principal questions. First, does the Profession meet the needs of "On Civil Religion," without being so dominant in its spirituality

and love of all men that it detracts from civic allegiance? Second, is the Profession something that the Legislator could plausibly emulate and thereby obtain from the general public anything like the authority he needs?

The first question essentially demands that we evaluate the Profession in light of the chapter "On Civil Religion." The primary consideration should be whether the Vicar's Profession would generate faith in the articles of the 'civil profession'. That the Profession presents a compelling case aimed at disabusing a person of the one 'negative dogma', intolerance, should be evident. In fact, the second half of the Profession is in large part a more thoroughly argued version of Rousseau's criticism of organized religions in "On Civil Religion," except it is less concerned with their political effects and is in a tone more suited to persuading an individual (which is somewhat suspicious given that the youth is already persuaded of this side of the Vicar's cause).

That the Vicar also endeavours to instill in the youth the positive dogmas relating to God and His capacity for justly rewarding and punishing good and evil should be equally evident. In spite of the acknowledged impossibility of proving these claims, the Vicar promotes faith in them, and clearly does his best to make his position seem the most reasonable. There would seem to be a thorough compatibility, then, except perhaps for the final civil article of faith, that of "the sanctity of the social contract and the laws" (SC 131). Whether the Profession supports this essential article would appear to be a major test of its political usefulness. So, before turning to the second consideration (of whether the

Profession contains the requisite substance, and is given in a manner that accords with the requirements of the Legislator's task), I will address the issue of whether it can be seen to have a civically-directed message.

In "On Civil Religion," Rousseau (as noted in Chapter One) describes three kinds of religions: that of the man, that of the citizen, and that of the priest. The third is dismissed, the second both praised and blamed, and the first is mostly blamed. He does praise the religion of the man as that of the Gospel, that "saintly, sublime, true religion" (SC 128). But, while it may have its good points in *theory*, he makes abundantly clear that in *practice* it has a number of serious faults. In theory, it is essentially apolitical, but in practice it had been unable to stay that way and so proved to be politically pernicious. This was mostly attributable to the clergy which had gained power by it, and by that power been inevitably corrupted. The fact that there is no place for an 'official' clergy or other authority structure in the Vicar's natural religion should remove it from the criticism of being bad politically, at least in any active sense. The charge of being apolitical remains, however, and given the fully encompassing political life that Rousseau prescribes for the citizens of his Social Contract, this would appear to be just as important.

To respond to the concern that the Profession perniciously detracts from the goal of the Legislator by being apolitical, we find the most significant material in the last few pages of the Profession. Here, among other things, the Vicar criticizes Catholic policy against Protestants, and describes what he would do if he had authority over a parish. He also

advises the youth on whether he should return to his native Protestantism, saying:

> I think that to urge someone to leave the religion in which he was born is to urge him to do evil, and consequently to do evil oneself. While waiting for greater enlightenment, let us protect public order. In every country let us respect the laws, let us not disturb public order, let us not lead the citizens to disobedience. For we do not know with certainty whether it is a good thing for them to abandon their opinions in exchange for others, and we are very certain that it is an evil thing to disobey the laws. (310a)[78]

When one recalls the other exhortations that seem to give primacy to a healthy order in society, such as the attack on philosophers because they disrupt and destroy society's opinions, it is clear that the Vicar makes a number of strong statements strongly supporting the laws, and as such (at the least) is not entirely apolitical.

Besides this overt support of political order, there is an important sense in which the Profession differs from Christianity with respect to its other-worldliness. It is true that the Vicar would have us strive to listen to our hearts, numb ourselves to the whims of the passions, see material

[78] Immediately after this the Vicar says "I have just recited to you with my own mouth my profession of faith such as God reads it in my heart." Though I may be deceived, the inclusion of "just" suggests that perhaps this rich quote immediately preceding it is the essence of the Vicar's beliefs (and perhaps even Rousseau's). Regardless, the final point he makes overtly supports the laws, and lends credence to my theory regarding the primacy of political health being the conclusion the Profession can be seen to lead us to. Though he is speaking of the importance of public order over religious practice, the statement could just as easily apply to philosophy, or the promotion of any dogmatic ideology, insofar as they are directed at replacing traditional opinions without a demonstrably healthier long-term replacement.

prosperity as of little importance, and other spiritual-sounding recommendations. But these exhortations are based upon the happiness we will gain in *this* world through their practice. Though the Vicar also invokes the afterlife, I showed in Chapter Four that if it does not exist, it doesn't change the reasons for living in accordance with his principles at all.[79] The order that is central to the Vicar's system is based on what he sees, what he feels, and what speaks to him in this world. Though requiring effort, aligning ourselves with this order reaps great earthly dividends.

In describing near the end of the first half of the Profession how the good and bad men differ from one another, the Vicar declares that "The difference is that the good man orders himself in relation to the whole, and the wicked one orders the whole in relation to himself" (p.292a). The center of the whole, he adds, is God, and the other creatures make up concentric circles around Him. This is a key conclusion, in that there is a big difference between finding your proper position in relation to everything else versus making things as advantageous to you as is possible. The first approach would seem to risk settling for too little, while the latter risks never finding satisfaction and acceptance of one's 'lot in life'. The former would appear to be the kind of Christian that Rousseau criticizes in "On Civil Religion" for being susceptible to slavery, in that he would seem to be virtually indifferent to the goings-on of this life and concerned only with not doing anything wrong so as to affect the next.

[79] That is, unless one proceeds to unravel the whole notion of a just God from it. Though the order of things which is the source of the Vicar's observations would seem to remain, one would feel much more confident in re-valuing the actual order were it not created by an omnipotent, just divinity.

But this need not be the case, as one's "relation to the whole" in a divinely ordered system would presumably not be anything like slavery or some other profound inequality. The person in an unjustly ordered polity may well be willing to fight for their rightful position if they had thought it out and decided that it should (and could) be significantly better than it is. The other, the self-centered man, would not have any objective standards, and so would be more apt to acquiesce in the slavery of his polity. The idea of sacrificing for a 'greater cause' would never seem worthwhile to a man who believes that he is the only important thing in the universe.

The key difference between these two men is that one believes in a rightful order, and so can judge how well his life and society reflect that order. The other thinks that things just are, and accordingly wants to set himself up and manipulate things as best he can. He would ignore any extraneous considerations (such as the impact on others, or the so-called justice of his actions) so far as possible, since they would only impede his quest for 'earthly delights'. For this man, since he makes nothing of the duality of the body and soul, the inclinations of one are just as valid as the other, and those of the body and passions are both more tempting and much easier to fulfill. The Vicar strongly believes, however, that since the body and soul are not one, this man will not find lasting happiness - he will get, as we all do, the soul he deserves. The man who endeavours to listen exclusively to his inner sense of good will almost surely fall short, but in striving for the proper goal he will invariably come closer to the mark. The selfish man may think that he has done very well for himself, but should he come to realize that alone he is relatively insignificant, he would see that his life amounted to nothing. The good man rejoices in simply

existing as a well-ordered part in the beautiful order that makes up all that is good in life.

It is nonetheless the case that the support for the laws is not as substantially emphasized in the Profession as it easily could have been. I believe that this is intentional on Rousseau's part, and related to his disenchantment with modern civilization. A critical difference between "On Civil Religion" and the Profession, indeed between the Social Contract and Emile, is that the latter is always relevant to an individual, but the former is kind of a best-case society-wide scenario. Going back to the individual/group dichotomy discussed in my introduction, the teachings in the Social Contract are an ideal which may be approximated and striven for politically in the right situation. But more commonly, it exists as a kind of 'thought experiment' whereby one might better understand and evaluate existing regimes; its regime is not one that we can expect most people actually to live under. Emile, on the other hand, while also an idealistic 'thought experiment', is a book whose various lessons can be universally applied, insofar as anyone can improve a pupil or themselves through understanding and employing any number of its principles. The Vicar's message is likewise of use to all,[80] but only fits with patriotism in a relatively good regime. This would explain why the Vicar acknowledges the importance of not disrupting morals and laws generally, but makes one's *inner sense of good* primary to, or at least a rival concern with, what is *good according to the laws*.

[80] Or at least those who are uncertain about their faith or lacking it entirely, and in danger of losing their way completely. This would seem to be as relevant (if not more so) "to the public at present" as Rousseau believed it was in 1762 (295fn).

It is likely, however, that these competing concerns will occasionally be in contradiction with each other, and thus from Rousseau there is the suggestion that when the duties of a man coincide with those of a citizen, individuals are offered the best (if not only) chance to be truly happy. The Vicar, in contrast, takes on the task of showing the youth how to rise above the injustices of the earthly realm, and in so doing potentially create an "incorruptible happiness." This idea fits with how Christianity is described in its 'pure' form in "On Civil Religion," and one can imagine how historically it grew quite easily among the legions of individuals being treated unjustly in their respective political regimes. For a teaching intended to rescue those without means of remedying the externals of their unfortunate condition,[81] I think Rousseau supports the Vicar's purely spiritual 'religion of the man' response; it may often be the only way to deal with earthly injustices in such situations, and the Vicar's version is an attempt to improve upon the Christian model. However, Rousseau's endorsement of it would be only as a second-best, or fall-back position. Rousseau would prefer to remedy injustice - as a political philosopher he is not a coper but a maker.

Enter the Legislator, who, confronted with the opportunity of a Lycurgus, say, or a Solon, has the ability to relieve to a considerable extent

[81] In this respect, Christianity is similar to Buddhism or Stoicism. There is an important difference between Buddhism and Stoicism, however, in that the former seems to be an attempt to minimize the amount of self immersed in this life on this earth, while the latter is more of an attempt to ignore things beyond our control in this life on this earth. Politics is very much of this earth, but also changeable. Though a Roman slave may not be able to enact such changes, the fact that, for example,

the injustice of the earthly realm which treats good men unfairly, and forces potentially good men to be wicked in order to 'get ahead'. This unjust state of things in turn causes either suffering for those who remain good, or suffering for those who succumb to injustice in the form of self-inflicted damage to the soul. Regardless of the path chosen, all retreat within themselves, and away from their polity. What I see as Rousseau's biggest criticism of Christianity is the perpetuation of this apolitical unsociability. It sharply contrasts with the incorruptible happiness of the virtuous Spartans - the source of which was not in their love of men as befits a child of God, but in their practice of virtue as befits a citizen of Sparta. The attempt of both is to make men part of a higher cause, thus adding meaning to their lives and correspondingly giving them a reason to be good. For Rousseau, however, Spartan-style citizenship is preferable for a number of reasons. First, the association to the state is much more immediate and powerful, as it exists in the earthly realm, which we are unquestionably a part of. Accordingly, there is less speculation about its requirements, and easier confirmation of our positive contribution to it. Rousseau also clearly believes that it creates a stronger bond insofar as it narrows the focus of brotherhood to a certain group with whom one shares more specific bonds (rather than the typically vacuous notion of 'universal brotherhood'[82]).

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abandoned twins or a Swiss watchmaker's son *could* should serve as inspiring examples to many of us.

[82] This point echoes Rousseau's criticism of cosmopolitans in a number of his works, where he notes that their professed love and respect for all humans makes the worth of that love meaningless. It also obviates their having especially to love their neighbour - a love that would invariably bring up many more duties. His reproach would likely not

Still, as a way for an individual to cope with the oppression of an unjust regime (wherein Christianity appears to have originally flourished), Rousseau would seem to condone the improved 'religion of the man' as presented by the Vicar. In the Vicar's sole concern for the happiness of every man, he is thus justified in praising and even living the relatively apolitical, but nonetheless good life he does. It would be a more respectable alternative when the selfless patriotism which ruled a Spartan would be given on behalf of an unacceptably unjust regime. The fact that the Vicar's faith is open to patriotism, though, is key. Patriotism, for the Vicar, seems to be not inherently good, but rather something to be judged good in relation to the regime it supports. Because of the less malleable inner morality in the Vicar's teaching, a believer would likely support only a relatively just regime, and through relatively just actions.[83] This would be eminently suitable for the Legislator - who must replace an existing regime with one of sufficient justness - insofar as men concerned with justice will be better able to judge the superiority of his, and be compelled to provide whatever assistance is necessary to realize it. The success of this would make their lives better through their being able to be both good and sociable, and make the Legislator like unto God for creating a just order by which men can order themselves. In Rousseau's estimation, a man who can happily dedicate himself to his family and fatherland is a happy man indeed. Philosophy and religion, whenever they detract from

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be as harsh for sincere Christians (since the chief source of his attack on cosmopolitans comes from their tendency towards relativism), but the criticism would still be valid.

[83] Though he does not encourage anyone to rebel against one's polity, it is hard to imagine the Vicar being able, with a clear conscience, to be actively complicit with any clear injustice, even on behalf of his own polity. One could imagine, for example, an adherent of the Vicar's faith refusing to take part in the arrest of an

this possibility, are to be accordingly disparaged and combated, regardless of their intellectual or spiritual necessity. In that the Profession fosters the kind of sentiment the Legislator needs, and a version of it which would fully support a just regime, I believe the Profession is potentially complementary with Rousseau's political project.

Answering the second question (regarding whether the Profession is at all intended to be emulated by the Legislator) in the affirmative demands primarily that the youth addressed by the Vicar be reasonably representative of those whom the Legislator is to transform into citizens. Through looking at the condition of the youth, and the Legislator's need to persuade on religious grounds, I believe a strong case can be made that the respective audiences of the Vicar and the Legislator are related in an important and instructive way.

Rousseau not only hinges the success of his social contract-based republic largely on the Legislator, but hinges the success of the Legislator largely on his ability to convince people that his wisdom is divine. This seems to be in direct contrast with the Vicar, who does not make any claims that he has 'divine wisdom' *per se*, but that he has found what God puts in all of our hearts. As such, it would seem that the Vicar's example cannot be instructive to the Legislator in this essential regard. The youth,

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innocent man he thought likely to be unjustly convicted - even if commanded to do so by the state.

however, does not react as though the ideas in the Profession are as simple a discovery as the Vicar's modesty would lead one to believe. He responds in the interlude that he needs to reflect on the Vicar's beliefs, but "If after taking careful counsel with myself I remain as convinced of it as you are, *you will be my final apostle, and I will remain your proselyte unto death*" (294d, emphasis mine). Although the youth has objections, the power of the overall persuasiveness of the account suggests that these objections are in regard to less significant matters, or reflect the kind of uncertainty which may be unavoidable given the rational insufficiency we bring to the consideration of divine things. The youth seems willing, though, to give the Vicar the benefit of the doubt on these insoluble issues; put another way, he has faith in his wisdom. The Vicar appears to have demonstrated a greatness of soul to the youth that lends an aspect of divinity to his beliefs. Though we never hear what the result of the youth's self-counsel is,[84] his provisional response would certainly seem to indicate the acknowledgment of divine wisdom in sufficient degree for the Legislator's purposes.

The most persuasive evidence that Rousseau meant to indicate that the youth is roughly representative of a wider audience is the footnote he inserts immediately after the 'interlude' where the youth responds. The Vicar, in beginning the second half of the Profession, says that if the

[84] I would explain this qualified adherence as necessary and notable, given Rousseau's suggestion that the youth is somehow analogous to a younger version of himself. Had Rousseau not gone on to reflect deeply on the issues he presents here and confront the insufficiencies of the Vicar's account, he would perhaps have found the Profession sufficient. For a more common man, then, the Vicar would be a worthy apostle.

youth's "sentiments were more stable, I would hesitate to expound mine to you. But in your present condition you will profit from thinking as I do" (295b). At this point, Rousseau inserts the footnote: "This is, I think, what the good vicar could say to the public at present." When this is combined with the quote from the Reveries that I cited in my Introduction (about the Profession having the potential to "one day make a revolution among men"), it is evident that the Profession is meant to have larger implications. As an initial observation, Rousseau clearly felt that "the public" had had its faith in the established religions sufficiently shaken.[85] For those who had not (doubtless this would also constitute a fair proportion), the second half of the Profession, as I indicated above, would seem to be a text from which the Legislator could preach to the still converted.[86]

The main qualification to the assertion that the youth can be equated to the general populace is the emphasis, especially before and at the end of the Profession, on the age of the youth, and his being ripe for this education. It may be that, as with the Vicar's teaching, the Legislator's project would meet with much more success with a proper, timely education (i.e. sometime before adulthood).[87] Having the right kind of educational system for a nation's youth would certainly seem to be an

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[85] Additional information can be found in the Letters from the Mountain, where Rousseau says in describing his age that "Religion, discredited in all places by philosophy, had lost its ascendancy even among the people." (O.C. Vol 3, 802)

[86] This second half, which moves from a pro-God emphasis to a severely anti-orthodox stance, is so damning of organized religion that it is likely what pleased Voltaire and what especially aroused the clergy's consternation - which led to Rousseau's persecution. Today it seems, at least in secular quarters, rather bland.

[87] It is also possible (as suggested in the first footnote of this chapter) that a 'people' might be ripe if caught early enough in their history, i.e. in the 'youth' of a nation.

excellent way for him to start developing the civic-mindedness he is to engender in the citizenry. The teenage years are, according to the Vicar, the best, if not the only time to establish the character of an individual. That the character of an individual can be firmly set by a proper and timely education is, judging from Emile, something Rousseau also strongly believes.

We should recall that 'public education' in the institutional sense did not exist in Rousseau's time. In looking at Political Economy and The Government of Poland, however, we see proof that he supports the idea. In Political Economy, which contains a great deal of interesting material relevant to the Social Contract, Rousseau states with clarity the impact a Legislator type could have on people when he says that "If it is good to know how to use men as they are, it is better still to make them what one wants them to be... It is certain that people are in the long run what the government makes them" (SC 216). And later, "Do you want the general will fulfilled? Make sure that private wills are related to it; and since virtue is only this conformity of the private will to the general, to say the same thing briefly, make virtue reign" (SC 217). How is one to make the citizens virtuous? They must be taught to be good, and the teaching of patriotism is the most effective means (SC 218). "Public education, under rules prescribed by the government and magistrates established by the sovereign, is therefore one of the maxims of popular or legitimate government" (SC 223).[88]

[88] In The Government of Poland, great significance is given to the role education plays. In the chapter devoted to it, Rousseau goes into various details regarding the people who should educate, and the best way to make the youths patriotic. It is interesting that any discussion of religion is absent from the chapter and the book generally. I suspect

Clearly, the Profession on its own does not generate the kind of social spirit that the Legislator requires. Just as clearly, the Social Contract relies on a civic religion that, while not spelled out in detail, seems to exclude any sort but one similar to that which the Vicar presents. Looking at the natural religion of the Profession, there are positive features, such as the inclination to act morally and the more virtue-directed sense of self-interest, that would only have to be channeled into civic virtue. I showed that the Profession directly persuades of all the dogmas of the civil profession save one, but that there was tacit support of the directly political dogma as well. Both stress the need for tolerant piety in the citizenry. The debunking of organized religion, while preserving the sense of divinely sanctioned morality that the Vicar professes, is essential for both the Legislator and the civil religion. Additionally, the Vicar's goals, methods and indicated effects seem to correspond in large part to the difficult task of the Legislator, though on a smaller scale. Finally, the Vicar's faith does not translate into any specific rules that would obstruct the smooth operation of any legitimate government. Rather, it makes a case which may prove as persuasive as any that 'moral' action is inherently good, and that, however God can be rationally conceived, this notion is divinely supported.

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this is because Rousseau hoped to undermine Catholicism (a 'religion of the priest') in Poland through a healthy patriotism, but I am not sure.

This impetus to moral action is thus established, while leaving the actual definition of 'correct action' as open as deliberation - without exceeding the limits of what is intuitively just - permits. It is more than reasonable to demand that whatever the specifics of the Legislator's legislation turn out to be, its durability relies on it passing the test of sensibility according to a morally and civically inclined populace. This would engender a solid civil order, and one of a better sort than any previously possible or imagined insofar as it is agreed upon by a group who enter into it not as independent self-seekers but as fellow members of a whole, concerned above all with its well-being. It is also fair - and accordingly more lasting - because it is in accordance with a system that makes the ordered members feel as though they have willingly placed the inescapable yoke of the laws on themselves for a noble cause - making it no burden at all but rather a source of joy.

To conclude the political consideration of the Profession, it seems that by generating general acceptance of the balance between ignorance and best opinion as determined by the Vicar, the Legislator could make way for the primacy of political concerns; and, with the pious moral inclinations the Vicar evokes - impervious to the undermining efforts of the proponents of either organized religion or philosophy - the Legislator could generate the civic spiritedness necessary for the health and success of his project. With this rare, perhaps entirely unique opportunity, he could then make the concrete ideas of political right that Rousseau wants to implement truly sovereign. This corresponds with my conclusion regarding the philosophic side of my analysis, where in exposing the ultimate human ignorance about the most primary things, the Profession

makes a case for inner sentiment over pure reason, and forces us to reconsider the primacy of the politically salutary in the face of no 'higher' good being apparent.

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